

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

Written By: Yeimi Gagliardi, Chair of the Latino Services Task Force of Healthy Adams County

A couple of weeks ago at our local Adams County Farmer's Market, I had the opportunity to talk to a long-time friend. She, like all moms, living the "hybrid" life, an in-person and remote loving presence in her kids' lives. We talked about how she is simultaneously managing to work seasonal jobs and be the support system to her family, and friends. The good news from our conversation, her kids have recently graduated from the local community college and have chosen, to my delight! work in Adams County. The not so good news, the difficulties, the times of doubt and fear and the desire for more balance in her life.

We shared similar challenges and as I celebrated vicariously her triumphs, I thought of how, even with the shared experiences, there are factors that ultimately play a role on how she and I can achieve that "desire" balance, and that in some ways, as a society, we have succeeded but in others we have failed. My friend is a brief snapshot of a first-generation woman, who prefers Spanish to express herself and English as needed for interactions that assist her in reaching specific goals; a digital immigrant, whose kids are bilingual, bicultural, and digital natives. Her routine is filled with activities that support her family and friend's needs. She is selfless, hardworking and is one of the most resourceful individuals I know. In our data driven world we measure her contribution to society in outputs such as schooling years, language proficiency, hours worked, civic and community engagement, income level, financial equity, immigration status, life expectancy, social media likes, etc.

Data analytics and the resulting insights have done good work exposing hard truths about equity, environment, value creation, service provision and public opinion, among others. We collect data, as much as we can, to measure and guide our decision-making process. It is the way of the world and yet, the decisions fall short to build the support systems that will bring balance in our world, for all.

The Latino Service Task Force works to raise awareness about the needs of a specific group in our community, but we can argue, the shared needs of many. We use data analytics as a tool, but it is not our only tool. We collaborate with community stakeholders to analyze the data and examine the reality of what is not captured. Our hope is that the decisions, the programs, and the interventions are created with a perspective that includes the realities of all members of our community, and in the long-term builds the support we need to find more balance in our lives.

From September 15th to October 15th our nation celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month. For many of our Latino community members in Adams County, just like other months, is a time to work hard, spend time with family and friends, eating delicious food, playing soccer, centering in our faith practices and when possible, celebrate the achievements that came with sacrifice and determination.

This year, for Hispanic Heritage Month, I would like to encourage each of you to celebrate the parts of your life that may not be measured, the essence that is impossible to capture in the data. Look around and see what systems you have in place that allow your life to be in balance. Think about the shared stories of our ancestors, who perhaps shared similar challenges and celebrated triumphs only possible, in this great nation, the United States of America.

Yeimi Gagliardi
Chairperson

Latino Services Task Force
Healthy Adams County