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## Professor encourages Latinos

A daylong program in City Hall is aimed at inspiring the local Latino population to succeed through education and participation in politics, arts and community events.

**By Holly Herman**

*Reading Eagle*

Carlos Ojeda Jr. told the local Latino community Saturday how he overcame obstacles on the road to success, and he urged parents to push education for their children.

"I believe in change," Ojeda said in City Hall during a program called the State of Latinos in Berks County. "Everyone can change. I believe with education, most of the Latino population can change."

The 30-year-old Kutztown University professor of management and business told how he overcame numerous obstacles to get his position.

About 100 community members and leaders attended the daylong event aimed at encouraging Latinos to participate in politics, arts and community events. The program featured a variety of speakers and a forum offering information on how to get involved.

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Voices	Mayor Tom McMahon said he hopes Ojeda's message reaches parents and children in the Reading School District.
TV Times	The mayor said 42 percent of the 82,000 city residents and about 62 percent of the city's 17,400 students are Latino.
Religion	"We have a dynamic city with a great deal of culture," McMahon said. "This message needs to be out. People need to get involved in the community."
Mr. Know-It-All	
Berks the Bizarre	
Mini Page	Ojeda told the group about how his parents, originally from Puerto Rico, moved from Newark, N.J., to Reading when he was young.
Berks Road Projects	
<b>MULTIMEDIA</b>	Ojeda said that even though he spoke perfect English he was placed in bilingual classes, a decision that bothered and confused him.
AP Videos	
Local Videos	
Ask the Mayor	Eventually he was moved into regular classes, but by high school he was hanging out with the wrong crowd and getting in trouble. Educators suggested his prospects were limited.
Ask the Commissioner	"My guidance counselor told me I should be a beautician or a mechanic," he said.
Movie Minute	But Ojeda thought otherwise.
Photo Galleries	
Interactive	
RSS News Feed	
<b>SPECIAL SECTIONS</b>	He said he earned 1100 out of 1600 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test and went to Bloomsburg University.
Mature Living	
<b>CLASSIFIEDS</b>	Ojeda said that at first he didn't take his studies seriously and left college.
Find A Car	
Find A Job	But then a tragedy hit that made him realize it was important to get an education.
Find A Date	
Find A Home	On Aug. 22, 1995, his 19-month old godson Zachary Day dislodged a screen when he was playing with toys on a bed and fell seven stories from an apartment to the pavement in the 700 block of Court Street.
Find A Rental	
Merchandise For Sale	Ojeda said he was devastated by the boy's death, but the loss made him determined to go back to school.
Directory	
Selling Your Wheels	
<b>YOUR COMMUNITY</b>	Ojeda got his bachelor's degree from Bloomsburg and then went for a master's degree at Kutztown.
Campaign 2005	
Things to do today	
Community Links	He urged fellow Latinos to get an education.

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“Together our voices can be heard and we can make change,” he said. “We must not remain silent as crime increases. We need political organization and we need support for change.”

Guadalupe Rivera, a Berks County representative on Gov. Ed Rendell's Advisory Committee on Latino Affairs, said Latinos are encouraged to take an active role in the community.

She said in the last decade many Latinos moved to Reading from Puerto Rico, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Colombia.

“We are here with resources and motivation to strengthen the Latino community,” Rivera said of Saturday's event.

Contact reporter **Holly Herman** @ 610-478-6291 or [hherman@readingeagle.com](mailto:hherman@readingeagle.com).



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