

# Hispanic forum seeks ways to keep kids in school

By LAURA YEE  
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

## CLEVELAND

About 500 people gathered yesterday for the sixth biennial Hispanic Community Convention to endorse an ambitious package of policies and programs that target issues in education, health care and employment.

Titled "Beyond Horizons: Creating New Frontiers," the daylong convention at Lincoln-West High School drew Hispanics from Greater Cleveland, Lorain, Dayton, Youngstown and other communities throughout the state. It was convened by the Hispanic Com-

munity Forum, a non-profit organization that addresses quality-of-life issues affecting Hispanics.

This year's conference focused on empowering the Hispanic community through education.

"If students aren't educated, they won't be productive citizens contributing to the economy, and they won't be able to affect politics," said Myrna E. Villanueva, executive director of Esperanza Inc., an educational non-profit organization aimed at motivating Hispanic youths. "Education is the key that will open the doors to opportunity. The commu-

nity is more aware of that now than it ever has been."

The agenda includes:

■ Holding quarterly meetings, beginning this spring, between Hispanic organizations and the Cleveland public schools to address academic achievement and the dropout rate. Hispanic students, who make up 6% of the district's 71,000 pupils, have the highest dropout rate and the lowest reading scores.

■ Ensuring that tutoring, guidance counseling and other programs are available to Hispanic students when they are most prone to drop out and when students move out of bilingual classes.

■ Establishing a task force to ensure that the Cleveland schools enforce a staffing plan reflecting the Hispanic student body outside of bilingual education.

Villanueva, who headed the education committee, said her group also planned to meet with the reform-minded school board majority elected in November and with the district's incoming superintendent, to address problems facing Hispanic students.

"We have recognized that we have to demand that the system address educational outcomes for our students," Villanueva said. "We cannot wait any longer because the system is not going to do it for us."

Other policies and plans adopted yesterday included studying the elderly's health-care needs, expanding social, cultural and recreational programs at the Hispanic Senior Center; persuading the Job Training Partnership Act and other job resources to offer English-as-a-second language programs; requesting that Hispanic neighborhood pharmacies provide bilingual services, including prescription information in Spanish; and establishing parent programs to help youths.

Participants at yesterday's convention adopted 66 policies and programs that they will work on over the next two years.

## BLOODMOBILE

Accident victims, surgical patients and people with diseases such as leukemia, cancer and hemophilia depend on the availability of blood and blood products to survive.

The American Red Cross tries to collect more than 900 units of blood each day from volunteer donors for distribution to area hospitals. Every unit is screened for exposure to health hazards such as hepatitis and AIDS.

Anyone 17 or older, weighing at least 105 pounds, and in good health is eligible to give blood and is encouraged to do so every 56 days.

Bloodmobiles will be at the following locations this week. Further information about the blood program or Bloodmobiles, may be obtained by calling the Northern Ohio Region offices of the Red Cross at 431-3106 or any local Red Cross office.

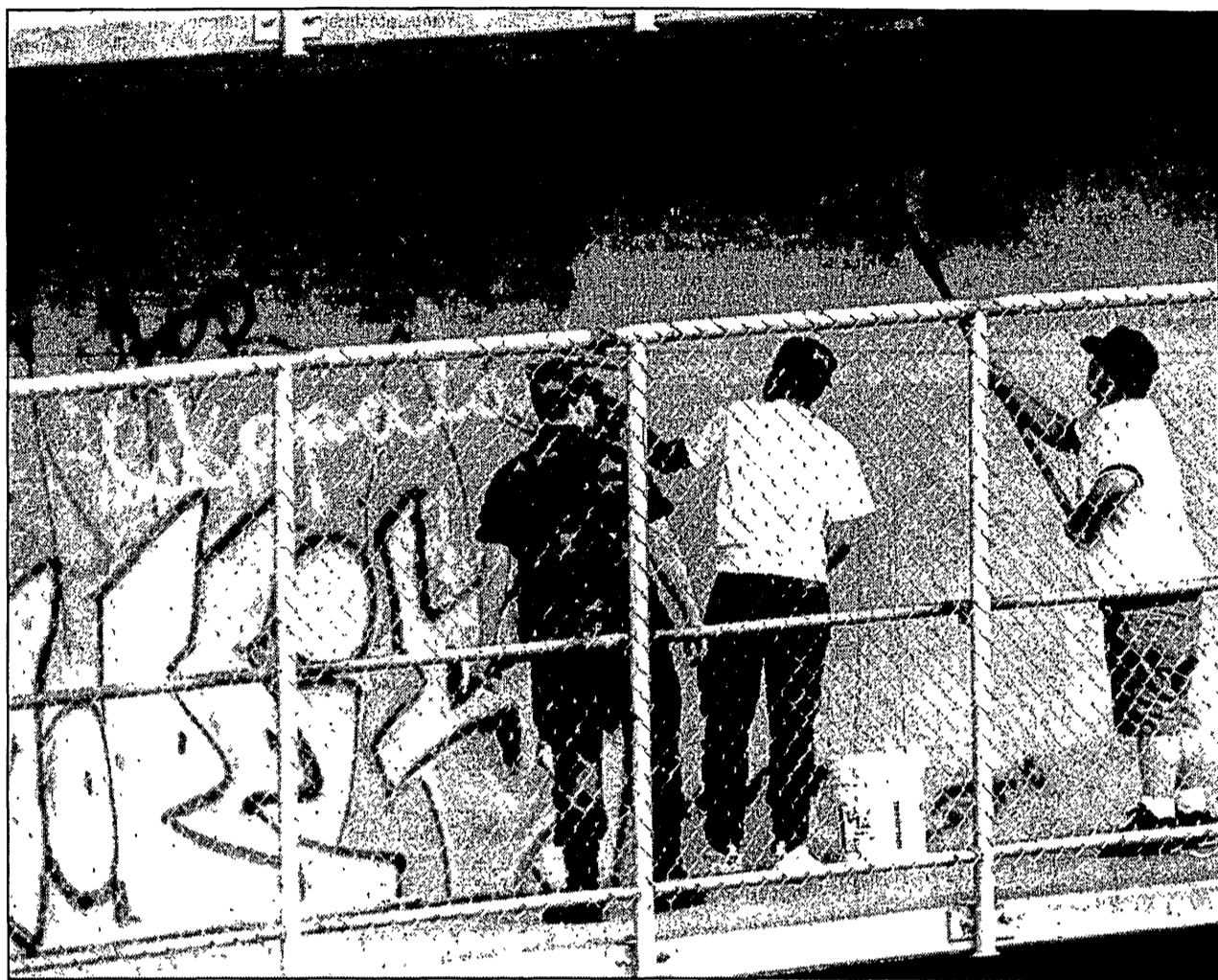
**Tomorrow:** American Red Cross, 3747 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Cleveland Heights Library, 2345 Lee Rd., Cleveland Heights, 1 to 7 p.m.; Dunbar Hall-Kent State University, Midway Drive, Kent, noon to 6 p.m.; Oatey Co., 4700 W. 160th St., Cleveland, noon to 6 p.m.

**Tuesday:** American Red Cross Rocky River/West Shore Service Area Office, 20335 Center Ridge Rd., Rocky River, 2 to 8 p.m.; Fairport Harbor High School, 329 Vine St., Fairport Harbor, 1 to 7 p.m.; Medina General Hospital, 990 W. Washington St., Medina, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Schurmann Lutha Service Center, 1223 Julius Weil Dr., Mayfield Heights, 2 to 8 p.m.; Shore Cultural Center, Babbitt Rd. and E. 222 St., Euclid, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Southeast High School, 8423 Tallmadge Road, Edinburg, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Wednesday:** American Red Cross Parma/Southwest Service Area Office, 5690 Ridge Road, Parma, 2 to 8 p.m.; American Red Cross Shaker Heights/Southeast Service Area Office, 16700 Chagrin Blvd., Shaker Heights, 1 to 7 p.m.; Bainbridge Town Hall, 17826 Chillicothe Road (Ohio 306), Bainbridge, 1 to 7 p.m.; Crestwood High School, 10919 Main St., Mantua, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Penton IPC, 680 N. Rocky River Dr., Berea, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Thursday:** American Red Cross Parma/Southwest Service Area Office, 5690 Ridge Rd., Parma, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Buckeye High School, 3084 Columbia Rd., Medina, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.; MetroHealth Medical Center, 3395 Scranton Rd., Cleveland, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Shore Cultural Center, Babbitt Rd. and E. 222 St., Euclid, 1 to 7 p.m.; Statter Office Tower, E. 12th and Euclid Ave., Cleveland, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Friday:** American Red Cross Rocky River/West Shore Service Area Office, 20335 Center Ridge Rd., Rocky River, 1 to 7 p.m.; Brecksville High School, 6376 Mill Rd., Brecksville, 12 to 6 p.m.; Cuyahoga Heights Fire Station, 5480 Grant Ave., Cuyahoga Heights, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Kent State Tr. Towers, Corner of Loop and Dietz, Kent, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Mt. Sinai Medical Center, 1800 E. 105th St., Cleveland, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; St. Mary's Family Center, 268 N. State St., Painesville, 1 to 7 p.m.



PD/RALPH J. MEYERS

Young volunteers paint over graffiti on a pedestrian walkway over Grove Ave. in Lorain with the assistance of an Ohio National Guardsman from the 112th Engineering Battalion.

## Community spirit turns graffiti gray

By ERIC HOUSTON  
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

### LORAIN

They were giving the brush yesterday to gang symbols, obscenities and other graffiti smeared on some of Lorain's bridges and buildings.

"It feels good to take this junk off the street," George Cruz said as he and several other youths put a fresh coat of gray paint over graffiti that once covered the pedestrian walkway over Ohio 57.

"We wanted to show the community that we're positive," said Tony Ortiz. "People drive by and kids see all these obscenities on the wall. That's not good."

In addition to the bridge, five graffiti-marred buildings in the city were targeted yesterday by the young volunteers.

"If these kids can take the initiative, why can't the rest of the community do the same?" said Mike Ferrer, director of youth services at El Centro de Servicios Sociales, a South Lorain so-

cial agency that primarily serves the Hispanic community. "We want to make a statement that this is our community and we take a lot of pride in our community. This is a gesture to the community that we care."

Ferrer said he hopes the cleanup effort will improve the image of Lorain, which he says has taken a beating from high unemployment and crime.

"That graffiti was put there by gang members and kids in the neighborhood," Lorain Councilman Rigo Reveron said as he pointed to the overpass. The pedestrian walkway is in Reveron's ward.

"Some of the kids who put it there are now clearing it up, so this is a positive sign," said Reveron, who helped youths collect paper and other trash along Ohio 57. "It's so important because the community itself is doing it."

The effort was sponsored by Lorain city schools, an Oberlin College student group and El Centro. Paint and equipment were donated by local businesses.

Some youths who joined yesterday's cleanup are enrolled in a job-training program operated by El Centro. The program, which receives funding from the Lorain County Employment Training Administration, teaches participants computer, math, reading and job-interviewing skills.

Several motorists traveling on Ohio 57 honked their horns in appreciation of the overpass's new look.

"When people come to Lorain, they see this (graffiti) and the first thing that comes to mind is, there is crime and gangs here," said Ferrer.

He said he wasn't sure whether yesterday's cleanup would keep graffiti from returning to the bridge or the buildings.

"It doesn't look good for the city," said Robert Torres, who attends Lorain High School and is enrolled in the El Centro job-training program.

Torres said it was significant that local youths took time to clean up the graffiti. Said Torres: "We want to help with the cleanup and show the city that we can do something positive."

## Bikers

FROM 1-B

The bikers, however, hired a lawyer and pushed to be classified as a lodge, just like the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and agreed to upgrade the building so it could be used for gatherings and parties.

They installed exit signs, new doors and a portable toilet outside. The township finally declared them to be a lodge, and earlier this year the club passed all of the required inspections from the health, building and fire departments.

Township officials have said they had no problem with the bikers, whose long hair, leather jackets and motorcycles made them stand out from most Chatham Township residents.

"As long as they abide by the zoning and they're up to code with everything, it is fine with us," said Chatham Township Trustee Cheryl Nagel. "They seemed to pass everything."

Williams, a former Boy Scout leader, has now become a familiar face in Chatham Township. He and other club members talk frequently with neighbors and he regularly attends trustees' meetings.

Phyllis Grimm, owner of the Chatham General Store, which is down the street from the clubhouse, said: "I don't have any problem with them. They are always very polite here."

"To me, they're just like anybody else. They ride bikes, they have parties and they make noise," she said.

While at least one neighbor continues to complain about the bikers, most nearby residents have been quiet or praiseworthy of them, Williams and local officials said.

"We take care of the place," he said of the clubhouse. "We take a lot of pride in our building."

The Medina County Sheriff's Department said it has not had any trouble with the club or its members since the clubhouse was established, and Williams said deputies hardly give the bikers a second look anymore.

"The cops, I don't see them anymore," he said. "They don't even turn their heads."

While yesterday's party is history, members intend to keep on with the revelry through today.

"Just like the VFW has their annual dance and everyone is invited, everyone is invited to this party," Williams said. "No attitudes, no hassles."

## Group fighting state's GA cuts turns to washing cars for a day

By HARRY STAINER  
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

### CLEVELAND

Patricia Arnold and Robert Royal wiped down a car yesterday while Lynda Hall hosed soapsuds off another car nearby.

Royal said he lost his maintenance job Jan. 24 and had been unable to find work since. Arnold, whose General Assistance benefits are running out, said there were no jobs to be found. Hall, a precinct committeewoman in Ward 7 who is unemployed, agreed with Arnold.

The three Clevelanders were among hundreds of protesters who 11 days earlier completed a 150-mile walk to Columbus to bring attention to the plight of thousands of Ohioans who lost their GA benefits April 1.

Arnold and Royal agreed with Hall that the march was worth making, even though it did not get the benefits restored.

"It made a great difference in our lives to let our politicians know we're hurting," Hall said.

Now that the march is completed, the demonstration is over and the headlines have grayed, those in need who walked the distance refuse to fade away.

About 40 of the 47 who began the march from Cleveland have joined together to try to find a way to lift themselves out of their poverty with the help of the Interchurch Council of Greater Cleveland and the Catholic Diocese, said Mylon Waite, associate director of the council.

Yesterday they held their first Poor People's Car Wash in the parking lot of St. Adalbert Catholic Church, 2347 E. 83d St.

At 1 p.m., there were fewer than a dozen cars being washed. The crew could have handled more, but \$6 a car may have been high for the Adalbert neighborhood.

"Maybe we should have opened the car wash closer to the Indians game, where a lot of cars are," Waite quipped.

The council's role is to aid the group in its meetings and help the poor realize their goal of self-help, Waite said. "We're really just the cheerleaders," Waite added.

St. Adalbert donated its lot, the water and cleaning supplies.

The group is still discussing whether to hold other car washes, find a way to use an automated car wash or even to switch to another business, such as offering simple home repairs, Waite said.

They hope to get into some business that will allow them to earn enough to find permanent shelter when Project Heat's winter emergency-shelter program ends next month, Waite said. Not all of the 40 are in emergency shelters, but many have lost their GA benefits.

More than 90,000 of the 154,000 Ohioans on GA were dropped from state welfare rolls April 1. Others face future cutoffs.

The state changed the rules last year to make assistance available for only six out of 12 months. The monthly stipend also was reduced from \$148 to \$100.



PD/MIKE LEVY

Patricia Arnold and Robert Jackson, left, get a little wet as they work at the Poor People's Car Wash in the parking lot of St. Adalbert Church, 2347 E. 83d St.

## School board pondering new designs for arts center

By MAGGI MARTIN  
PLAIN DEALER REPORTER

### MENTOR

A Mentor schools architect, sent back to the drawing board last week, provided new drawings for a proposed high school auditorium yesterday.

Geoffrey M. Varga, an architect with HWH Architects Engineers Planners Inc., presented four new proposals for the \$6.5 million Fine

Arts Center, which is to be built next to Mentor High School on Center St.

An earlier proposal that included white and blue tones was nixed by city planning officials, who called the color scheme garish.

Board members agreed to consider two more designs and will decide on one by Tuesday's board meeting. Their decision will be based in part on whether the City Council will pay an additional \$150,000 for design changes.

The city planning commission rejected the board's first plan, claiming the blue color for the facade of the 1,500-seat auditorium did not complement the brick-and-earth tone facades of Mentor High School and nearby Mentor Civic Center.

The board accepted two of Varga's new designs. Both included brick colors and earth tones.

"We tried to keep in the back of our minds what we think the plan-

ning commission wants for the facility," Varga said. "We want to blend with city hall and the civic center and utilize some bricks."

The two proposals include a design that Varga said would match the Mentor High School color scheme. That would include orange stripes with a gray/tan roof.

A second design under consideration provides a mostly white facade with the top portion all white and the bottom portion showing various

stripes of bricks placed at varying levels.

Varga said regardless of the new outside design, the interior will need to be reviewed to ensure it matches the exterior.

The new designs will delay construction, Varga said.

Robert Strickland of Cobrick Construction Co. said the brick facade could mean a 10-week delay. The roof would have to be put on during the winter, he said, and e delays will

increase costs.

Varga said changing the design and adding the brick and masonry material could increase the project's cost by an estimated \$150,000.

City officials agreed last week to consider providing the school board with up to \$150,000 to pay for the redesign. City Council meets at 7:30 Tuesday. After making a decision, council members will notify school board members, who meet the same night.