

'Dream big and persevere' says Assemblymember Reyes at annual Cesar Chavez Day breakfast

Assemblymember Eloise Gomez Reyes (D – San Bernardino), honored last month at the 13th annual San Gabriel and Pomona Valley Latino and Latina Roundtable's 13th annual Cesar Chavez Day breakfast for her commitment to service and values, told an audience of 300 that Chavez talked about persistence many years ago.

"But he also talked about having great dreams come true and he said there were two things that were important – first you had to have a great capacity to dream and second you need persistence," she said at the event at Pomona's Sheraton Fairplex Conference Center. "That's us – we dream big and we persevere – we persevere because we know that there is something greater, not for us as individuals, there's something greater for the community."



Anthony Chavez...
...grandson of Cesar Chavez

"We need to be concerned, not just for the small group that we hang out with, we need to be concerned for the most vulnerable, we need to be concerned for the homeless, we need to be concerned for the students that are being discriminated against, we need to be concerned about the undocumented students that now are being told that all of this may be taken away," she added.

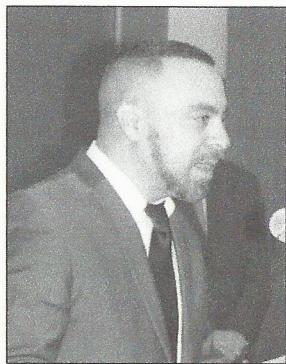
She said before she became the first Latina to open a law office in the Inland Empire's Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, "I had a journey similar to so many of you."

"I am the proud daughter of immigrants," Reyes said.

Her mother, she said, married her dad at the age of 14 and joined him in the United States when she was 19. And it was her parents who taught her about hard work picking onions and grapes in the fields.

"That's how we bought our school clothes," she said.

Her mom bought their first house when she was 20 for \$1,000 and since has bought



Paul Knopf

"and kept" all of her houses.

"Her love for her family, her love for her community is so great," Reyes said. "We have to remember we are living in this world together and I want others to look at who we are here, what we represent, because we represent the greatness of this country."

Roundtable President Jose Calderon introduced Reyes as someone who has been in the forefront of a grass roots effort with the residents of Colton in an effort to prevent the development of a hazardous waste dump in their community.

She was the co-founder of the Inland Empire Community Health Center to help bring affordable health care to the region and as an adjunct professor at Cal Poly University Pomona she worked to connect the classroom to civic engagement, making an impact on the lives of students in the region.

She was a recipient of the Wiley Manuel Pro Bono Legal Services Award from the State Bar of California, and she was honored as Attorney of the Year by the Inland Empire Latino Lawyers Association.



Scholarship winners were honored at the Latino and Latina Roundtable Cesar Chavez breakfast. Pictured, from left, are Julissa Loza Mendez, a psychology major at Cal Poly University Pomona; Kelly Nguyen, a student at Bassett High School; Roundtable Vice President Angela Sanbrano; Fernando Flores a graphic design major at Citrus College; and scholarship committee members Ion Puschila, a social science teacher at Pomona's Garey High School, and Brianne Davila, assistant professor of sociology at Cal Poly University Pomona.

Professor Manuel Castillejos

Also honored was Professor Manuel Castillejos of Mt. San Antonio College, a teacher at all levels for more than 40 years who teaches Spanish at Mt. SAC and has also taught theater arts and Chicano studies at the college level.

When funding for the arts was cut after the passage of Proposition 13, he opened the Pomona School of Fine Arts to offer courses that were affordable to all members of the Pomona community.

He has directed complete plays and talent programs to promote education awareness in the



Assemblymember
Eloise Gomez Reyes

community.

Castillejos said that as a professor for 37 years at Mt. SAC "my focus has been, of course, my students."

"Every semester I am inspired, marveled, educated by the students that go through my classes," he said. "And that's what keeps me going."

He has also worked with students who came to him from

Paul Knopf

Honoree Paul Knopf, a high school history teacher at Pomona Unified School District who sees the importance of getting his students to use their knowledge outside the classroom to address needs in the community, said his attitude toward life changed and he "came back a difference person" after his mother and grandfather took him on a service trip to Ensenada at the age of 13.

"I experienced the inner joy one feels when partaking in an act of service and love," he said, adding that he learned what life is ultimately about – "connect-

ing to that part of us that longs to make a difference."

Pomona Unified School Board member Dr. Roberta Perlman called Knopf a "valued member of the PUSD family" and the "guru" of PUSD's learn-

ing and community engagement program.

"He truly embraces the philosophy that teaching our students to serve others provides great benefits not only to the recipients of the service but also to the emotional well being of our students," Perlman said.

PUSD programs he has been involved with include the creation of the PUSD Seal of Service Award, the California Democracy Civic Action Plan, the Read to Feed Program with Heifer International, the Pomona Enrichment Program, an energy conservation and recycling program, a teen court program, the young men's circle group and the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council.

His award was for social justice and the betterment of youth.

Rayahi Haifa

Also honored was Rayahi Haifa, owner and general manager of Mercado La Cachanilla which opened in Pomona in 2009 and now also has locations in Azusa and Corona.

Dream big and persevere... pg. 19



Representatives of Mercado La Cachanilla accept award on behalf of store owner Rayahi Haifa as Latino and Latina Roundtable President Jose Calderon, at right, looks on. It was the first time the Roundtable honored a small business.

MEChA who, for the past two years, after deciding that the school's Chicano studies classes of the 1970s were a little passé, developed a curriculum for gender and ethnic studies that was adopted by the administration – and only the name was changed to "social justice."

"So power to our students," he said.

He was recognized for his commitment to the arts, the betterment of local communities and "the empowerment of our Latino youth in the tradition of Cesar Chavez."



Tony Cerda, chief of Pomona's Costanoan Rumsen Carmel tribe of Native Americans, offers a closing prayer at the Roundtable breakfast.

Dream big and persevere... from pg. 18

The store was recognized for its "culture of caring" and for treating its customers as family.

The store supports charitable causes and also donates food each year to the annual Roundtable Cesar Chavez Pilgrimage as part of raising funds for an annual scholar-



Madeline Rios, at right, receives "Community Star Award" from award designer Dr. Jeffery Mio, professor of psychology and sociology at Cal Poly University Pomona.

ship given to students going on to college.

"This store really has formed a relationship with the community," Calderon said.

Haifa was represented at the Cesar Chavez breakfast by his employees and even some of his customers.

The recognition was the first time the Roundtable had honored a small business.

Madeline Rios

And Madeline Rios, who chairs the Roundtable's immigration committee and owns a local translation service, received the Roundtable's new "Community Star Award."

Rios told the group that the Roundtable has developed principles of inclusiveness that have been adopted by many organizations in the Inland Valley and beyond.

"(This) includes the rights of immigrants to be at the table on all immigration reform issues," she said, adding that "this is an immigrant rights movement, not a correction of a broken system but a struggle for full rights."

"We hope we will be able to expand the rights of immigrants here in California during these times of resistance and eventually at the national level," she said.

Grandson of Cesar Chavez

Anthony Chavez, grandson of National Farm Workers Association (later United Farm Workers union) founder Cesar Chavez, told the group "we're all carrying on those same values" of those who have gone before.

"When I share with our students I always remind them as I learned from my grandfather and many other students learned over the years, the end of all education should surely be service to others," he said. "And that's a message that I take deeply to heart."

Chavez, who works for an educational justice non-profit working and advocating on behalf of the underserved student population in California, said "going forward the importance of education will only continue to grow."

"It's going to be groups just like the one that's here assembled today, it's going to be all of us coming together to make sure that we're holding the line and we're raising the bar for our community," he said.



Manuel Castillejos is honored for his commitment to the arts and the empowerment of Latino Youth at the Roundtable's annual Cesar Chavez breakfast. Pictured, from left, are Angela Sanbrano, Roundtable vice president; Castillejos; and Jose Calderon, Roundtable president.