

Latino Leadership

Three years ago, Barrington High School graduate Juan Mendez received a letter while sitting in class asking him to be a part of a new club. Called “Latino Leadership Club,” this club was created to bring leaders together from the Hispanic population at the high school, which makes up about 10 percent of the school. Since then, numerous students, including senior Laura Ramirez, have joined the club, helping make the group stronger. Under the leadership of students like Laura and Juan, Latino Leadership has gained momentum and become a prominent volunteering presence at the school. We talked with Juan and Laura to learn more.

QUINTESSENTIAL BARRINGTON: When and how did Latino Leadership become a club at BHS?

JUAN MENDEZ: It started out my freshman year, and I’m a senior now, so three years ago. It started with letters delivered to us saying that they wanted us to be in this new club called Latino Leadership. It used to be a during school club, so I attended because I was curious about it. It was my freshman year and I was unsure of what to expect from it. I was new to the school, so I thought I would just try it.

LAURA RAMIREZ: I wasn’t here when it became a club, so I just got involved because a friend told me it was a fun and cool place to be.

QB: How big is Latino Leadership?

LR: At the beginning of this year it was big, but lately people started dropping off.

JM: Right now we have 40-50 people. Some people couldn’t come to meetings because they had work or something else, like sports, to do.

QB: How big would you like to see Latino Leadership?

JM: Personally, I would like to see it get as big as possible. I know eventually some people may not really be interested in it, but I hope that a lot of people in the future will join. It also looks good for colleges and it’s good for the school and the community in general.

LR: I feel like being in leadership opens up so many opportunities and makes them so much more reachable. It’s a good club to be in.

QB: What is the intention and motivation behind Latino Leadership?

JM: When we started off, it was just to get noticed in the school, and by that I mean just for us being able to participate in things that people would never expect Hispanics to do. Like, my freshman year, there weren’t many people involved in activities like sports or clubs, but now that Latino Leadership has started, after three years a lot of people have joined or started clubs. For example, Laura does wrestling stats and yearbook.

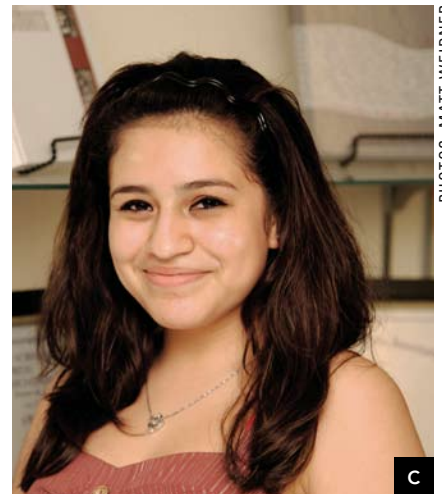
LR: People are getting involved in track, football, and things like that. I feel we’re really getting involved in BHS and the community and showing all the diverse things we can be involved in.

QB: Were there any hurdles to overcome since starting Latino Leadership Club?

JM: Mostly stereotypes. That was the biggest thing that we had to overcome.

QB: How do you overcome them?

JM: Mostly by showing that we’re not the typical stereotypes. We proved that we can be better than what stereotypes say. Like people say, ‘Oh, Latinos, they’re always gangbanging, or doing drugs,’ and stuff like that. But people that are in the club that I know of don’t do any



PHOTOS: MATT WEIDNER

- A) BROCK WORKMAN
- B) JUAN MENDEZ
- C) LAURA RAMIREZ