

HISPANIC ATTORNEYS COMMITTEE

SUBMITTED BY: [Marilyn Martinez-Walker](#)

Pursuant to your request, the following is a report on the activities and achievements of the Hispanic Attorneys Committee for the year 2006-2007.

As you know, this was the Committee's first year under the ACBA. We got off to a great start by holding the first ever Hispanic Attorneys Committee reception in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month in September, 2006. We had over 80 guests at the event which was held at the law firm of Thorp, Reed & Armstrong, LLP.

In October, the Committee participated in the event, "Serving the Community." We had attorneys and law students volunteer their time to provide information about our committee and about the legal resources available to the Latino community in Allegheny County. In November, we held our first ever legal workshop at St. Hyacinth Church in Oakland. The workshops are held once a month at the church and they help provide information in Spanish on various legal topics including immigration, criminal law, and social security benefits.

In the fall, we started our mentoring program with students at Duquesne Law School and the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Over five students were paired up with a local attorney to serve as their mentor. Cathy Bissoon, a partner at Cohen & Grisby, organized the program and has been instrumental in helping to coordinate the law students with the lawyers.

In December 2006, our Committee had a meeting with some local judges, the chief public defender, local ACBA representatives, state court officials and the Warden of the Allegheny County Jail regarding an issue stemming in the local jail with Hispanic inmates. Since that meeting, our Committee has been instrumental in translating into Spanish the current jail video that is shown to inmates. The jail video provides the inmates with basic information regarding the rules and regulations of the jail and what their rights are during their detainment.

During that meeting, the Committee also agreed to help the state court with the translation of various state court documents. The Committee is currently in the process of translating the documents which include court documents and forms from the criminal courts, family/adult division, orphans and probation and register of wills.

In April 2007, the Committee also spearheaded the first ever "Latino Law Day." The event was held at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. The event consisted of inviting local high school students to the law school and introducing them to the legal profession. The high school students had the opportunity to hear from the Director of Admissions at the law school, Latino law students and Latino lawyers from the area. The students also had the opportunity to sit through a Constitutional Law class, and have lunch with the law students and lawyers.

It has definitely been a busy, but rewarding year for our Committee. Our goals for this year include the continuation of the legal workshops at St. Hyacinth. These legal workshops are essential because it provides basic legal information the Latino community in Spanish. We are currently planning another event to be held in September during Hispanic Heritage Month. It will be at this event that we will help to honor a local individual who has helped the Committee fulfill its mission statement. We will continue our mentoring program with the local law students and look forward to planning the 2nd annual "Latino Law Day." We are hoping to invite more high school students and make the event even bigger this coming year.

All of these events are in line with the Committee's mission statement and we will continue to work hard to help our Latino law students, lawyers and the Latino community. Thank you for the opportunity to Chair such a great Committee. I look forward to another great year. Please let me know if you need additional information.