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DEL PASEO BORICUA

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PRCC USHERS IN GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY WITH IMMERSIVE AND EDUCATIONAL ECOTOUR TO 11 TOWNS IN PUERTO RICO

GREAT HOLIDAY SEASON FOR BUSINESSES ON PASEO BORICUA: THANKS TO EFFORTS OF PRCC SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER



PG.10



PG.18



SAVE THE DATE
03/03/2022

PRCC CELEBRATES:
• 27TH THREE KINGS DAY GIFT GIVING CELEBRATION
• 27TH ANNIVERSARY OF PASEO BORICUA'S FLAGS OF STEEL

Join us at ¡WEPA! Mercado del Pueblo (2559 W. Division Street) Celebrate: Corretjer's Birthday and The Puerto Rican Cultural Center's annual open house (100x35+14)!



PG.6



ABOUT LA VOZ:

The most recent manifestation of Puerto Rican journalism in Chicago, La Voz del Paseo Boricua proudly continues in the legacy of our community's previous newspapers. Founded in 2004, La Voz del Paseo Boricua, or simply 'La Voz' as it is affectionately called by our readers, is a grassroots bilingual periodical published by the Juan Antonio Corretjer Puerto Rican Cultural Center. We report on stories relevant to our community on a bimonthly basis, disseminating news about local events, programs, resources, and developments. As an alternative source of media, we seek to acknowledge the achievements of the Puerto Rican community at large and to advocate for the preservation of the heart of our barrio in Humboldt Park - our "pedacito de patria" in Chicago.

SOBRE LA VOZ:

La más reciente manifestación del periodismo puertorriqueño en Chicago, La Voz del Paseo Boricua continúa orgullosamente el legado de nuestros primeros periódicos. Fundado en 2004, La Voz del Paseo Boricua, o 'La Voz' según se le conoce cariñosamente por nuestros lectores, es un periódico de pueblo, publicado de manera bilingüe por El Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño Juan Antonio Corretjer. Bimensualmente, divulga historias relevantes de nuestra comunidad, diseminando noticias sobre acontecimientos, programas, recursos, y progresos locales. Como fuente alternativa de medios, intentamos reconocer los logros de la comunidad puertorriqueña al igual que abogar por la preservación del corazón de nuestro barrio Humboldt Park - nuestro "pedacito de patria" en Chicago.

MEET OUR PRODUCTION TEAM



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Discuss support for Puerto Rico Self Determination Bill: Senator Durbin meets with Puerto Rican Agenda and Puerto Rican Cultural Center



By La Voz Staff

On Wednesday January 26th The Puerto Rican Agenda, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center, Paul Roldán from Hispanic Housing, and ex-Congressman Luis Gutiérrez met with Illinois Senator Richard Durbin via a Zoom video conference. The aim of the meeting was to seek the senator's support for the "Self Determination Bill for Puerto Rico", which is sponsored by Congresswomen Nydia Velázquez and Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez. Senator Durbin raised several critical questions,

which led the participants to engage in a lively discussion about the merits of the bill. Congressman Luis Gutiérrez outlined the historical and political processes in relation to past plebiscites and referendums on the island. He emphasized the importance of this congressional binding, self determination bill to provide the final solution to the status question of Puerto Rico. Paul Roldán added that Puerto Ricans had sacrificed their lives for the U.S. in every war since World War I; alluding to his own participation in the Vietnam

War. The conversation also included comments by the ex-New York City Council President; Melissa Mark-Viverito as well as those of Jessie Fuentes, Juan Calderón, and José E López. Renata Barrágan from Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez's office answered several questions the senator posed. The senator acknowledged receiving communications from the 4th District's Representative Jesús "Chuy" García in support of the bill. The meeting concluded with Senator Durbin committing himself to having a deeper discussion with Senator Duckworth to see if they could provide a coordinated response to the ask. The Self Determination Bill has already been picking up steam in Illinois, Senator Cristina Pacione-Zayas persuaded the Illinois Senate to unanimously adopt a resolution supporting it. Additionally, at the city level, Alderman Roberto Maldonado spearheaded the resolution adopted by the Human Relations Committee as well as the entire City Council by a unanimous decision as well.

C.A.A.C. BRIEFS

COMMUNITY AS A CAMPUS (C.A.A.C.) BRIEFS:**Richard Yates Elementary Welcomes Students Back**

By Marvin García

On Wednesday, January 12th, teachers and staff at Richard Yates Elementary welcomed students back to in-person learning. This follows a five-day cancellation of classes due to a walk-out by Chicago Teachers Union members. In anticipation of students' return to school, Yates staff and administrators worked diligently to prepare safely for Wednesday. Additional safety and health protocols have been implemented school-wide to keep students, staff, and the community protected against COVID-19. One of these safety measures was to encourage parents and guardians to enroll their children in the free weekly COVID-19 testing at the school. If you are interested in registering your child, you can sign up at www.color.com/readychckgo-cps or call 773-534-4550

The Journey of Cesar: A West Town Academy Student

By: Marvin García

Cesar transferred from Curie High School in the middle of his senior year. He enjoys art, music, computer programming courses, and guitar club. At first he was doing well - moving steadily toward graduation, but Cesar lost motivation during the pandemic, and found it hard to engage remotely. He fell off track and his graduation date of June 2021 got pushed back. Since reengaging this school year, Cesar has flourished both academically and socially. He has maintained great attendance and has been recognized as one of our top 10 students on our monthly attendance board - all this while working 30 hours a week at Potbellies. In addition, Cesar ended the first quarter with a 4.0 GPA, and he is on course to earn a 4.0 in quarter two. To this date, he is maintaining his 4.0 GPA, and in January Cesar will soon complete his high school studies and graduate from West Town Academy. He hopes to continue his great passion for art and become a tattoo and piercing artist.

Nita 21st Century Grant Awarded to PRCC/CAAC

By: Marvin García

A Nita 21st Century Grant was awarded to PRCC/CAAC to serve students and families at Richard Yates Elementary School and West Park STEAM Academy. The grant will provide

\$100,000.00 for each school to support morning, after school, weekend, and summer programming focused on STEAM



C.A.A.C. BRIEFS

Students at Our Centro Infantil Consuelo Lee Corretjer Mobilize Their Gross Motor Abilities in Rain, Sun, or Snow

By: *Marvin García*

Our students from Centro Infantil are enjoying the indoor playground to mobilize their gross motor abilities. Even if the weather is not adequate for our students to be outside, we are using our secondary plan to provide indoor activities for them. It's important to practice gross motor activities to help children grow in everyday functions, like walking, running, crawling, climbing, throwing, hitting a ball with a bat and so on. Gross motor starts when they are babies, they start kicking their small feet, moving side to side. Each stage is different but



we always need to have a gross motor in order to have adequate skill to move around. Our students practice all these abilities on a daily basis with their parents and teachers, like getting dressed,

putting on their shoes, standing up, jumping on puddles, running, crawling to get a toy, throwing snowballs, going up stairs. Early childhood advocates recommend that children regularly move their

whole body to take all the energy out and be able to focus more on other activities.

The Flamboyán Classroom

enjoys the indoor playground with the presence of classroom teachers; Ms. Sara Rosado and Ms. Graciela Arellano, and Ms. María Almanza.



Northeastern Illinois University launches Dual Enrollment Program with four Humboldt Park Schools

By: *Marvin García*

In collaboration with Roberto Clemente Community Academy, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School, Association House High School and West Town Academy, 17

students will begin dual enrollment classes on January 31, 2022. The students will take two classes, a Latin American History, and an introduction to Philosophy course. Northeastern will

also provide college preparation and mentorship. Seniors who enroll will be provided a scholarship known as NEIU for you 2.0. This scholarship covers a student's first-year tuition.



Greater West Town – Adult Job Placement Program Success Stories: The COVID - 19 Response Team

By: *Marvin García*

The Adult Job Placement Program (AJP) team at Greater West Town Project is always looking for the potential in each client we serve. From the start of the intake interview, to the job readiness assessment, the AJP Team always has the clients' best interest in mind. The AJP Team helps people find more

than a job; we help them find a pathway to a new career. The following are three success stories of three ladies who used their skills to create a pathway to careers in allied health and customer service.

Josephine worked as a Customer Solutions Representative/ Inside Sales at World's Finest Chocolates for

twelve years. She told AJP that she was looking for a different career in the medical field and decided to go back to school to obtain a Medical Administration Degree. Being that she was looking for employment and going to school, she wanted to find a position in the medical field customer service industry. Because

(Continue on page 6)

Albizu Campos High School's Care Team Facilitated A Week of Self Care for Students and the School Community

By Dr. Melissa Lewis

Amid a national health crisis and all that these last two years have brought us, Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School (PACHS) continually makes strides that center collective care through a holistic approach in which joy, community building, and healing are at the center. The return to in-person learning has been a challenge for all, but there is now a shift -- a call for educators to re-imagine education as alternative spaces of learning. With these lessons in liberation, there is an infinite amount of creativity that can be celebrated and that is celebrated at Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School -- as witnessed recently in our "Week of Self Care".

The Week of Self Care was curated in collaboration with PACHS staff, along with the community partnered organizations that make up their Care Team. PACHS' Care Team includes: The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC), Service Coordination and Navigation for Youth (SCaN), Alternative Schools Network (ASN), Association House, Catholic Charities, and BUILD Chicago. The week was fashioned through the creative efforts of all members involved to serve students and the school community during a time of uncertainty and adversity. Caring is a direct act of love, and there are a multitude of approaches that demonstrate this great love. PACHS students' first workshop of the week was a bachata class that was hosted on Monday

morning by Karen Romero, Youth Experiencing Success (YES) Mentor. The following day, students partook in crafting their own personalized essential oils with BUILD Members and Science Teacher, Elizabeth Levenda.

When the school day ended for some, the after-school day began for others. They practiced

Devin Kelly.

When it comes to care, it is essential to include strategies of harm prevention as well. For this reason, partners PRCC and Trans Health provided free COVID-19, HIV, and STI testing for students and staff alike.

As the week came to a close, PACHS geared

up for its Community Potluck where students, family, and friends came together to nourish each other through shared meals, thoughtful conversations, and restorative laughter. Through the visionary creations of La Familia Support Group and Truancy Mentor, Sandra Sumlin, students engaged in karaoke, a dance competition, and lots of selfie-taking under the holiday themed photo drop with Campos' very own Santa Claus, who also happens to teach US History and Economics, Josh Cohen.

Among the joy of the potluck, somewhere in a quiet corner was a group of students, staff and faculty who took part in practicing affirmation and vulnerability through a

gratitude circle exercise led by SCaN Mentor, Nadia Estrada. Through this activity, members witnessed their impact on others and took a moment to acknowledge those they see everyday who have an impact on them as well, whether it is through a small gesture or several acts of care that help make the Albizu Campos community what it is.



care and autonomy through the Green Thumb Club, which takes place at PACHS' very own greenhouse led by Science Teacher, Rachel Geetha. As the week progressed, conversations of mindfulness developed among students and BUILD's Mobile Mental Health Team. Following this was a Candle Making Workshop led by English Language Arts Teacher, Jes Connolly, along with Yoga led by Social Worker,

C.A.A.C. BRIEFS

(Continued from page 4)

she had extensive customer service experience she was hired with the Chicago COVID-19 Community Response Corp as a COVID-19 Community Response Worker. Josephine now receives the training she needs to help Chicagoland Communities get critical information on how to stay safe and healthy amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Amber came to the AJP Program looking for full-time employment. She relocated to Chicago as a certified Medical Assistant in another state. Because of her experience with assisting clients and the transferable skills she brings from past jobs, Amber was offered the COVID-19 Community Response Worker Position. With this experience she will be able to network with other agencies to explore future work as a Medical Assistant.

Sonja came to the AJP Program looking for a career change. She had worked in the warehouse/logistic



industry for more than ten years. She told AJP staff she wanted to find employment in the customer service industry. Because Sonja had transferable skills from her past employment she was able to get

hired as a COVID-19 Community Response Worker. This will give Sonja a new skill to add to her resume and find permanent work as a customer service representative in any industry she is interested in.

All three women are very happy with their new job title and job responsibilities. It takes courage to set goals and commitment to follow through. This is why all three ladies were interviewed and hired for the COVID-19 Community Respond Worker Positions. We can't wait to see what the future holds for each of them.

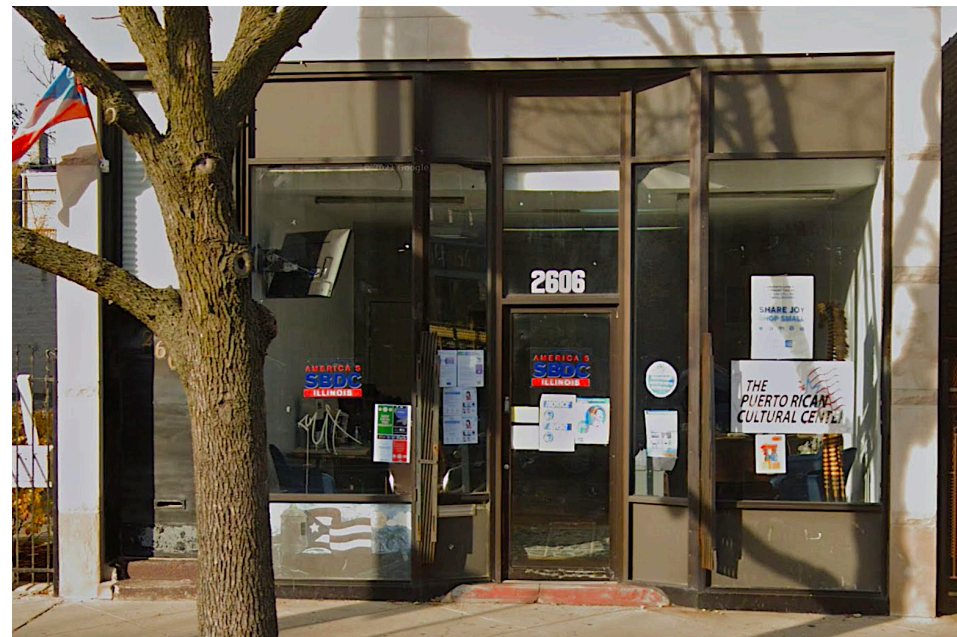
If you or someone you know are in need of employment, contact the Adult Job Placement Program at 312-432-1300 to make an intake appointment today. We are located at 500 N. Sacramento Blvd. Chicago, IL 60612.

SBDC at The Puerto Rican Cultural Center Serves Spanish Speaking Business Owners

By Honorio Torres

After English, Spanish is the most prevalent language spoken in Chicago. According to the Census Bureau ACS one -year estimate, 23.6% of the population of our city are native Spanish speakers. That is about 600,000 people as of 2019, and that number is growing. So who do they turn to when they are in need of guidance and translation services for the many programs that are available to them? The Puerto Rican Cultural Center can proudly say they can come to us. In the 4th quarter of 2021, the City of Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) rolled out the COVID-19 Small Business Support Program (CSBS). This program provided funding to selected organizations to deliver highly specialized business services to business owners aiding in their recovery from the

COVID-19 public health emergency. The Puerto Rican Cultural Center provides entrepreneurs and business owners in the Humboldt Park area



The Small Business Development Center of the PRCC located at 2606 W. Division

with targeted expert training and dedicated resources to help address common challenges

brought on by the pandemic. We continue to provide assistance with translation services, accessing capital, business planning, and

technical assistance. We serve our Spanish speaking community by guiding and sharing information on Covid-19 relief resources provided by federal, state, and local governmental entities. This once in a lifetime pandemic has brought financial hardship, declines in revenues, and increased costs to many small business owners. Unfortunately our Latino/a business owners have suffered. We are optimistic and hope that 2022 will bring prosperity to our Humboldt Park commercial corridors. The Puerto Rican Cultural Center will continue to provide the much needed aid to all of our

community members, and build a brighter future through our local small business owners.

PRCC Celebrates 27th Three Kings Day Gift Giving Celebration and 27th Anniversary of Paseo Boricua's Flags of Steel

By Cheyanne M. Daniels (SUNTIMES)

On January 6, 2022 The Puerto Rican Cultural Center celebrated the 27th year of the Día de los Reyes gift giving event. For more than two decades, The Puerto Rican Cultural Center has celebrated an annual parade on Paseo Boricua led by the Three Kings, and has given thousands of gifts to children in the community to celebrate this iconic holiday. Three Kings Day is a momentous date in the Puerto Rican calendar; it is for that reason that the cultural center works so hard to keep this celebration alive in the hearts and minds of our youth. The first time The Puerto Rican Cultural Center celebrated Día de los Reyes on Division street was in 1995. Not many people know this was the same day the beloved Flags of Steel that now mark Paseo Boricua were erected. Día de los Reyes has been a historic day for Puerto Ricans on the island and in our community of Humboldt Park for generations. Unfortunately, for the past few years the COVID-19 pandemic has affected how we celebrate our beloved holiday by adding mask mandates, social distancing, and skipping the parade. Regardless, we have not once canceled this celebration. It has always been our work to honor our heritage in the face of any

challenge. The following article is a poignant account of the event as witnessed by a reporter from the Chicago Sun Times. The parking lot of the ¡WEPA! Mercado Del Pueblo market was filled with children laughing and drinking hot cocoa

the holiday include a special holiday cake with a baby Jesus figurine in the center and, of course, presents.

"I remember when I was a kid, I couldn't wait for January the sixth to get gifts," said Caesar

Zepeda, a member of the Latin American Motorcycle Association, one of the sponsors for the day's event along with the cultural center and West Town Bikes. Zepeda was dressed as one of the three kings.

José López, executive director for the Puerto Rican Cultural Center, said Jan. 6 is "probably the most important

date in the Puerto Rican ritual calendar."

"The three kings represent, in the Puerto Rican imaginary, something very, very unique," he said. "In Puerto Rico, they are called Santo Reyes Magos, meaning they are saints. And in Puerto Rico, there's a whole tradition of making promises to them. They become very, very important in terms of the spiritual elements of Puerto Rico."

Cabanas said she found out about Thursday's event from Facebook. Like Zepeda, Cabanas was excited to share an important tradition from her Latino heritage with her daughter.

"It's exciting because it's for us Mexicans," she said. "It's very traditional, and we kept that tradition going so it's something nice, something extraordinary."



Devon Davis and his sister Kenya McGowan with their gifts

as members of the Puerto Rican Cultural Center handed out gifts Thursday.

Even though Christmas has come and gone, children like 10-year-old Yisel Moondragon and her mom, Lupe Cabanas, are wrapping up their holiday season with Día de los Reyes.

A popular holiday in Latin America, Día de los Reyes, or Three Kings Day, commemorates the biblical story of the three wise men's journey to honor baby Jesus with gifts. Traditions for



(Continue on page 8)

Juan Antonio Corripio
THE PUERTO RICAN CULTURAL CENTER

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HUMBOLDT PARK YOUTH EMPLOYMENT & EMPOWERMENT CENTER



The Humboldt Park Youth Employment & Empowerment Center offers a work and life-readiness program for youth ages 16-24, which provides its participants with courses and on the job experience. Specifically, with the opportunity to gain workplace skills, career education, resume and cover-letter training, as well as case management and counseling for youth. Youth must live within the community, meet at least one hardship requirement, must be willing to work 15 hours per week and take two 2.5 hour courses per week in order to be eligible for the program. Youth are paid \$15.00 per hour for their 15 hours of work per week, and are paid bi-weekly.

(Continued from page 7)

For Yisel, opening the gifts couldn't wait until they got home. As her mom held her new pink bike, Yisel tore off the wrapping paper to unveil a painting kit. She said she plans to paint a picture for her mom Thursday's event normally comes with a parade. But because of COVID-19 and the biting cold, the cultural center, West Town Bikes and the Latin American Motorcycle Association had to cancel the parade.

Still, by late afternoon, Lopez said, 70 bikes had been donated, and they were quickly running through the nearly 2,000 wrapped gifts that were donated by community members and Toys for Tots.

"Just being here and having this kind

of festivity in the middle of the pandemic is a sign of hope," said Lopez.

Devon Davis and his little sister, Kenya McGowan, attended with their grandfather, Mike McGowan.

The siblings left with two gifts each.

Devon, 9, said his favorite part is "having family surround you and you get cool things."

McGowan said he'd brought his two grandkids last year and was happy when he heard the event would take place again.

"This is wonderful," he said. "It's good that they give back to the neighborhood and the children, especially through the rough time that's going on right now."

Honoring the Womxn Who Have Shaped our Work and the Legacies they Left Behind on International Women's Day 2022

By *Xiomara Rodríguez*

Save the date for The Puerto Rican Cultural Center's Annual International Women's Day Celebration this March 8, 2022. This annual celebration has been a major part of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center's history since the 80s. Throughout the years, the celebration has taken on various characteristics ranging from a ceremony and market of women-owned businesses to teach-ins, to award ceremonies honoring women in our community. No matter how the Womxn's committee of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center decides to celebrate this international day of commemoration, the tradition has always been to honor the women who have impacted our work of promoting the self-determination, self-actualization, and self-reliance of The Puerto Rican people.

Coincidentally, February and March are also the birth months of two incredible Puerto Rican women who have heavily influenced the Puerto Rican Cultural Center's work; Doña Consuelo Lee Corretjer (March 29, 1904) and Julia De Burgos (February 17, 1914). The legacy these women left behind is immortalized in the everyday work of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center. Both women brought



Doña Consuelo Lee Corretjer

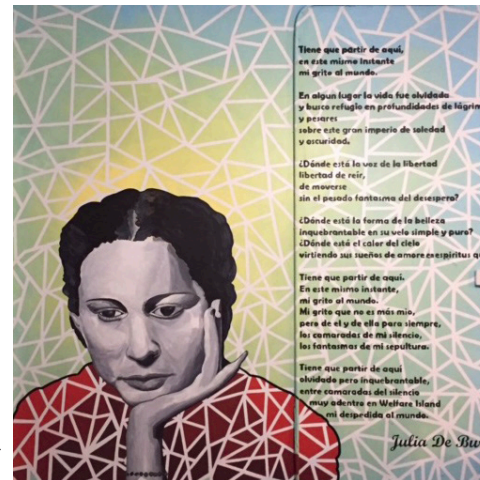
to this world profound conceptualizations of justice and love, which we try to live by everyday at the PRCC.

The PRCC's slogan "To Live and Help to Live" came from one of Doña Consuelo Lee Corretjer's iconic quotes: "Long ago this idea was placed as the cornerstone to construct the philosophy of egoism: "live and let live", in place of the human philosophy: "Live and help others to live". This last concept is fundamental for a human life that bases itself in cooperation and responsibility, which is in essence love". Doña Consuelo Lee Corretjer's teachings of cooperation and responsibilities are major influences in the teachings of our Childcare Center, which bears her name because she understood the importance of the next generation carrying on our work.

Similarly, Julia de Burgos is immortalized in the consciousness of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center in many ways, particularly with a mural

dedicated to her at our shelter for LGBTQ+ youth experiencing houselessness, El Rescate. Julia de Burgos, a brilliant Boricua Woman was known for her powerful poetry, which spoke to issues of love, injustice, feminism, colonialism, slavery, and the national identity of Puerto Rico. The mural at El Rescate incorporates Burgos' last poem titled "Farewell in Welfare Island", which speaks so poignantly to the prison of dependency and absence of freedom in the presence of welfare. In this way Burgos is a constant reminder of our fight against dependency, and that we must approach all our work through solidarity not charity.

It is critical that we who promote the mission of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center continually reflect on the work and teachings of women in our work, because they have been the silenced warriors. In the Puerto Rican independence movement and most social justice movements in the US, men become the voice/face while women carry out the difficult, less glamorous, and less visible work. every year, The PRCC's Womxn's Committee organizes the International Women's Day activities. On this day, they honor the unsung heroes of our community. We hope you will join us on March 8, 2022.



Julia de Burgos Mural at El Rescate

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE WOMXN'S
COMMITTEE OF THE PRCC'S
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
CELEBRATION

MARCH 8, 2022

Centerfold

Centerfold

(Continued from page 11)

in Puerto Rico with the Mayor of Ciales at el Museo de Café, where we learned how Puerto Rican coffee is grown. Later we witnessed the process that coffee undergoes at the agrocomercial coffee cooperative in its Torrefacción in Frontón, Ciales, where Cibales coffee is produced. In Ciales we also visited Casa Corretjer where we learned about Juan Antonio Corretjer's life and legacy with a tour given to us by our Puerto Rican patriot, Luis Rosa. After Ciales, we went to the workshop of Juan Villalobos to see how he makes Puerto Rican wood furniture using traditional Taíno weaving techniques. Finally, we ended the day in Barrio Coabey, Jayuya where we visited Casa Canales and the sacred Taíno batey in the valley of the Gods.

- **On Thursday, December 23rd:** We traveled to Maricao where we were welcomed by the Mayor Wilfredo "Juny" Ruiz, who personally prepared coffee from Maricao for us. Later we were taken to see the beautiful forest of Maricao and its highest peak (Monte del Estado), one of the homes of the Iguaca parrot. Our gracious hosts in Maricao were Angie Baiges and her partner Edwin. We ended the day in San Sebastián with a delicious dinner at the home of Millo, and enjoyed the beautiful sounds of classical guitar performed by San Sebastián born Hermelindo Ruiz Mestre.
- **On Friday, December 24th:** We ended the trip in Loíza where we were welcomed by Mayor Julia Nazario, and some of the members of Junte Loizeño, who served a traditional Loizeño lunch and offered us an amazing performance of Loíza's incredible Afro Caribbean bomba. It also included a guided tour through the Cueva María de la Cruz. During the visit our executive director and our chief operating officer engaged various mayors and leaders of civil society in discussions regarding advocacy and policy at the federal level for Puerto Rico as well as the intersectionality of these with the Diaspora. The PRCC presented checks to the following towns to purchase toys for the Three Kings Day celebration: Municipio de Maricao \$500.00, Municipio de Loíza \$1,500.00,

Centro Cirillo Meijer in Comerío \$1,000.00, additionally \$500.00 Casa Pueblo, and \$500.00 archivos históricos Vieques.

Reflections from Eco-Tour Participants:

The following reflections are from some of the participants of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center's eco tour about their experiences.

Marisel Vera: We drove up the mountains in Jayuya to El Cemí Museo and we walked the hallowed grounds where our Indigenous ancestors once walked. Pedro Albizu Campos would come to this sacred place to meditate. José invited our group to stand en el batey that was encircled in stones and to close our eyes; I closed my eyes. "Listen to the birds" he said, and I saw a seagull fly from right to left, and a small bird soar from left to right; "Listen to the trees", he said, and I heard the rustle of leaves at my back; "Feel the wind", he said, and I felt the breeze in my hair. When José said that every Puerto Rican that he had brought to El Cemí had felt the energy of our indigenous ancestors, I felt a rush of vibrations from my wrists down to my fingertips. Awed, I knelt down on the ground and touched the small stones, offering thanks to my ancestors for my blessing.

Jane Nicholson: We were a group of sixteen, amplified by heroes Oscar López and Luis Rosa. Many of us were new to one another with varied interests—all the better to connect with all that was in store for us. Our journey was a constant revelation of how to build and sustain community. Some of the communities that greeted us shared a great common goal, while others worked together despite different outlooks. We saw deeply into what community mayors wanted for their regions and how social networks were constructed and tended to. Comerío was our host community and included us in their Festival Jíbaro where the plaza served as a concert venue and open-air church. We clapped endlessly to rhythms and the spontaneous arts of the trovadores, as we slid into the heart of tradition. Others—such as master Antonio Martorell's studio and the installation at Casa Pueblo in Adjuntas where butterflies are sheltered, Café Madre Isla roasted, climate change studied,

and solar energy distributed, or the delightful La Casa de les Contrafuertes with its medicinal plant garden and limbers on offer in San Juan—immersed us in knowledge and commitment. The beach at Carolina, the stunning peaks and valleys of the Cordillera Central, the coastlines of Loíza, and the Island of Vieques, a place of beauty pock-marked by the unthinkable violations of the US Navy, wrapped us in splendor. Throughout, thoughts of the unique struggles of an island nation and thoughts of exploitative colonial relations with the U.S., were countered by brilliance and fortitude. We could see how much had been rebuilt after Maria—new and strong and then one house—in the middle of a small group enroute to the marvelous Forest Reserve of Maricao—remained dirt-streaked and covered in writing where one bit stood out: ME VOY. We were nourished in every way by our hosts and a vibrantly lived-in place, and though we brought gifts, I feel gently but urgently tethered to these communities by profound gratitude and the will to reciprocate. As preciously, other unimaginable itineraries are underway in Humboldt Park.

Xiomara Rodríguez: This trip to Puerto Rico showed me a Puerto Rico I have never known before. Growing up I remember hearing so many negative stereotypes about Puerto Ricans in the media about us being lazy, unintelligent, incapable, needing the U.S. for welfare and governance, etc. As a Puerto Rican I knew these stereotypes were wrong, but being on this trip and seeing the work of the Puerto Ricans we met instilled a feeling of profound pride in my people like I have never felt before. Everywhere we went we heard the same story of how people began their work when they faced the realities of government neglect and corruption in Puerto Rico, and made the decision to meet their community's needs themselves. It was incredibly inspiring to see people deciding to be self actualized and self determined rather than waiting on a government that truth be told owes reparations to Puerto Ricans far beyond any social security check. Almost everywhere we went on the island people said they were without power or water for six months after Hurricane Maria, and the

(Continue on page 17)

La Bodega del Barrio Food Bank is Here for You in 2022

By Leony Calderón

La Bodega del Barrio Food Bank, part of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center's Vida/SIDA program, is a food pantry serving primarily people living with HIV and families in need of food assistance. La Bodega offers the community health education, nutrition education, and fiscal activity in addition to providing the community with emergency food assistance.

With the collaboration of Amita Sanits Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center, La Bodega has been able to provide the community with health talks on topics of asthma, diabetes, nutrition, hypertension and metabolic syndrome and cancer education. In addition, to health education and with the collaboration of Dominican University, La

Bodega also offers nutrition classes and cooking demonstrations, and with the direct partnership with Muévete, La Bodega now offers physical activity.

All health classes are held in person every other week, with the option to attend classes virtually live online. For the link information please call. The physical activities take place daily at three different locations. Contact us to obtain the schedule of classes. All services are free to the community, and everyone is welcome to attend and participate (you must be 18 years or older to join the physical activity program).

For more information, please call 773-342-0855, or email labodega@prcc-chgo.org or visit us at 2628 W. Division St.



SERVICIOS GRATUITOS
ASISTENCIA ALIMENTARIA
(para participantes calificados)
Clases de Nutrición
Demonstraciones de Cocina
Actividad Física
(18 y Mayor)
773-342-0855
2628 W Division Chicago IL 60622



PRCC Public Health Initiatives and Vida/SIDA are Organizing a Group to Support Latino/x Entrepreneurs



A peer-motivated group designed to empower the Latino/x community through entrepreneurship, connections, and social support.



SCAN THE QR CODE, EMAIL US, OR FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA !

 gbi@prcc-chgo.org
 [gbichicago](https://www.instagram.com/gbichicago)
 facebook.com/publichealthinitiatives




This year we are hosting a peer-motivated group designed to empower the Gay Latino/x community through entrepreneurship, connections, and social support.

The group will explore a series of 12 topics that are designed to expand our knowledge, build on our ideas of what is the best way to hire employees, and create business plans. To keep it honest among us, we will explore social topics that have an impact on our lives - such as spirituality and thinking about our own connections, to talking about areas of our lives that have had an impact and shaped who we are today.

***QUALIFYING INDIVIDUALS WILL RECEIVE STIPENDS FOR SESSIONS COMPLETED.**

Our official first group session will take place on Thursday, January 27th at 6pm, with February commencing sessions every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month. Additional special sessions will take place in the summer and winter holiday months.

DUE TO COVID-19, SESSIONS WILL BE HELD VIA ZOOM UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

*Stipends are available for individuals who identify as cis-men and trans-men and whose sexual orientation falls within the LGBTQ spectrum.

Chi Covid Community Response Team Services Hundreds Weekly

By Tatiana Rodríguez

As our communities continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, The PRCC's Public Health Initiatives are addressing local health concerns. The Chicago COVID Community Response (CCCR) program tackles these needs

from all angles. By staying up-to-date on the latest Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations, the CCCR team offers various services such as free COVID-19 testing and vaccination access, and the sharing of medical information and resources to empower community members so that they can trust the latest research. "Black and Latine communities are traditionally underserved by the medical industry, making it difficult for people to make confident health decisions for their specific needs," says Ricardo Jiménez, the Public Health Initiatives' Associate Director. The CCCR team aims to offer the resources needed for said communities to protect themselves and each other, one testing event, vaccine clinic, and data update at a time.

Rapid result and PCR COVID-19 testing services are available Monday-Friday from

10:30 AM-5 PM at 2636 W. Division St. and 2753 W. Division St., the Lisa Isadora Cruz Trans Empowerment Center. Further, the CCCR team extends its testing services across Chicago's diverse communities through outreach initiatives. Free COVID-19 testing is available weekly to

the Swap-O-Rama Flea Markets, el Consulado General de México en Chicago, Steamworks Baths Chicago, Humboldt Park Health, and el Centro Infantil Consuelo Lee Corretjer Childcare Center, to name a few. Free vaccination clinics assisted by the CCCR team are also held weekly

across Chicago's neighborhoods. Single vaccination events servicing upwards of 350 residents at a time are made possible by "the unity of the team," which, "makes getting the vaccine a swift process, putting individuals at ease," says CCCR staff Jaylen Reyes. Every Saturday and Sunday during the month of February, individuals five years old and up can get vaccinated at Chicago City Colleges such as Malcolm X, Wilbur Wright, and Kennedy-King College. For more information, follow the Public Health Initiatives' Facebook page to stay updated on the CCCR team's service schedule and the latest COVID-19 information, such as travel advisories, data

summaries, and at-home testing and vaccination offerings.



individuals five years and older at locations across the city such as The Chicago High School for the Arts, Pedro Albizu Campos High School,

PRCC Mourns The Physical Loss of the Following Beloved Members of our Community:

Juan L. Calderón Pacheco

The members of The Puerto Rican Cultural Center are deeply saddened by the physical loss of 37 year-old Juan L. Calderón Pacheco, our Chief Organizational Officer, Juan Manuel Calderón's older brother. He was viciously murdered in Naguabo, and he resided with his family in Fajardo. The senseless murders across Puerto Rico, and in many marginalized communities across the US and Latin America have to be placed against the backdrop of the deep seated problems of historical and generational trauma.

Cecilio "Cheíto" Lugo Ortiz

On November 10, 2021 the Universe lost a true Patriot -- Cecilio Lugo Ortiz, son of María Esther Ortiz aka (María Lugo), husband to Sonia Guzmán, and father to Aiyanna Lugo. He was known to his family as Cheíto and Chet to his friends. As a teenager, Cheíto was a lifeguard at the Humboldt Park Beach where he met his beautiful wife Sonia of 18 years of marriage. He was athletic as well as competitive, especially when it came to swimming and diving. He coached a kids' baseball team in Humboldt Park where eventually his daughter played. He participated in many events for the removal of the US Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico and was able to be a part of history when in May of 2003, he traveled to Puerto Rico to witness the end of the US Navy and its bombing in Vieques. Cheíto also worked hard along with his mother and others for the release of the Puerto Rican prisoners. He was excited to see them finally free and even became good friends with Carlos Alberto Torres.

On September 20, 2017, Hurricane Maria

Don Benjamín Rosado

Benjamín Rosado was born in Corozal, Puerto Rico on May 18, 1941. He migrated to Chicago in 1965 and immediately settled in Humboldt Park where many Puerto Rican families had been residing since the mid 50s.

Don Benny, as he was known to friends and family, passed away on December 15, 2021 from a

This is the story of so many marginalized youth who grow up facing a vicious cycle of violence, addictions and mass incarceration and other social ills caused by a blatant systemic colonialism.

The best way we can respond to his untimely death and to the pain his family is facing is to redouble our efforts to change these systemic causes and on a smaller scale, financially aid the two children he left behind.

We are asking all our friends and supporters

devastated Puerto Rico leaving the archipelago with catastrophic damage and its residents suffering a major humanitarian crisis. Within three days, Cheíto was already in Puerto Rico becoming a foot soldier delivering food and much needed water to many in need. Many families from Chicago, Florida, and New York could not reach their families due to the power and entire communication system outage due to the Hurricane. They would contact Cheíto for help locating their families in need. Cheíto not only located them, he would bring needed water, food, and supplies. He would then use his cell phone to call their families with a live or recorded message from them. One of the many people that he helped was ex political prisoner Alberto Rodríguez and his family bringing them water to Vega Baja all the way from a firehouse in Guaynabo where he filled up barrels of water inside a small white pickup to deliver to much needed places. Alberto said he was the first one to come even before the Government and FEMA.

heart attack. He died in his wife's arms in the same apartment that he had occupied for the past 40 years, which is located at 2701 West Division. Don Benny will always be remembered for his Friday afternoon yard sales, and for never missing the yearly People's Day Parade, Fiesta Boricua, and Three Kings' Day celebration. On the days of these events, Don Benny

in whatever capacity they can, to make a commitment to care for his two children by making a donation payable to The PRCC via PayPal or using donations@prcc-chgo.org and noting that it is a donation for the Calderon Family Fund.

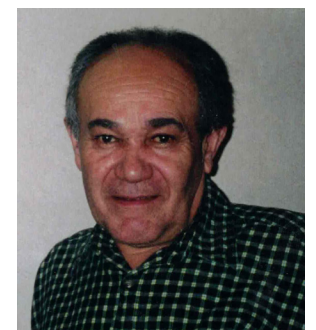


For the past 17 years, Cheíto was a well-known Babalawo, (a priest) in the Santería religion, where he helped hundreds of people. His life's passion was helping people.

Last year while visiting his mother in Puerto Rico, he wrote this from the airport on his Facebook status "Every time I leave here, I kiss the ground" you ain't met a MFR (mother f****r) that loves this island more than me".

Cecilio "Cheíto" Lugo you are a true Patriot. You will be remembered by many for your sparkling, comical sense of humor, as well as your compassionate and kindhearted soul.

would put out his chairs early each morning so he could have front row seats to watch comfortably. For many years, Don Benny was a huge supporter of all the events that were



(Continue on page 16)



Muévete

Movement for Life!

Physical Activity Program

Zumba

**Tuesday & Thursday, 5:00pm at
TransChicago Empowerment Center
2753 W. Division St.**

&

**Tuesday & Thursday, 6:00pm at
Kosciuszko Park Field House
2732 N. Avers St.**

~~~~~

### Dance-Aerobics

**Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 6:30pm  
At the Humboldt Park Field House  
1440 N. Humboldt Dr.**

**For additional classes and information  
scan the QR code on top.**

**773-342-0855**

**Muevete@prcc-chgo.org**



## Muévete Movement for Life is Back in 2022

By Leony  
Calderón

The Muévete physical activity program has resumed its physical activities post the holidays. We hope you had a restful, safe, joyous celebration and a prosperous New Year! Now that the holidays are behind us, we can now focus on a healthier new beginning. What better way to start a New Year's resolution then with a physical activity regimen and a nutrition plan? We are here to assist you in your health management journey. Muévete now in its 17<sup>th</sup> year of providing the community with free physical activity, is happy to announce that all the Zumba



and Dance-aerobics classes have resumed at Trans Chicago Empowerment Center; 2753 W. Division St., at the Kosciuszko Park Field House; 2732 N. Avers Ave., and at the Humboldt Park Field House, 1440 N. Humboldt Dr. As always, all classes are free, and you must be 18 years and older to register. COVID mitigation protocols are in place to keep

everyone safe; mask wearing during class, 6 feet apart from your classmates and everyone should be ready to show vaccine verification at the park district. Join us and get your health management plan back on track. 773-342-0855, Muevete@prcc-chgo.org. Looking forward to seeing you back in class! If this is your first time, Welcome!

(Continued from page 15)

held on Division Street.

Don Benny was very well known, not only because he lived in the community for 40 years, but because he was a great neighbor, wonderful human being, and a caring friend.

Don Benny is survived by his wonderful wife Lola, his seven daughters, Mari, Nilda,

Betsy, Gladys, Jacqueline, Maribel and Jenny, seven granddaughters, and six grandsons.

I considered Don Benny my handyman at El Rescate, every time I needed his help, he would always respond. Don Benny was an electrician by trade but he was more than that to me, he exemplified what is great in

humanity, and I will never forget the sorullitos that he made for me. Don Benny was an angel on Earth. He was my dear friend, whom I loved and respected. He was a man of his word, and his exemplary work ethic was what I most admired.

He will be dearly missed.



## VIDA/SIDA Celebró un Año Más al Servicio de la Comunidad Latina en Chicago

Por Carlos Trestini

En una íntima velada, el pasado miércoles 1 de diciembre, Día Mundial del SIDA, El Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño celebró el aniversario de VIDA/SIDA. El

Tahseen Siddiqui, especialista en enfermedades infecciosas, y destacados miembros de la comunidad LGBTQ+ en la ciudad, bajo la conducción de Fabian Rodríguez.

bienvenida y de agradecimiento fueron ofrecidas por el Dr. Cobbs; así mismo, el Dr. Siddiqui se encargó de compartir información sobre la importancia de prevenir la infección del VIH a través de alternativas como PrEP, de igual forma destacó la necesidad de recibir tratamiento médico aquellas personas infectadas con el virus, para lograr de esta manera el estado de indetectable, lo que se traduce a que una persona con el virus en este estado, no podrá infectar a otra persona, señaló el especialista.

El toque de entretenimiento estuvo a cargo de importantes artistas de la comunidad. Juliana Rivera, Miss Continental 2021 junto al Cacique 2019, Paul López, fueron los encargados de abrir el espectáculo. Para luego subirse al escenario la reconocida Cacica Honoraria 2013, Whitney Gaytán, quien puso a bailar a los asistentes. Para cerrar la noche, la actual cacica, Monica Beverly Hillz, subió al escenario llevándose los aplausos del público.

De esta manera, VIDA/SIDA y El Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño siguen comprometidos en ayudar a la comunidad latina y afroamericana que

vive con el virus del VIH, así como a educar a la población y brindar alternativas que logren frenar la transmisión del virus.

(Continued from page 12)

government aid was little to nothing. It was people on the island who worked together to help people survive the neglect. We met with people from Casa Pueblo who have been working to make Adjuntas energy independent using solar power. They told us that the whole time people in their community were powerless they opened up their space, so people could connect to power and refrigerate things like breast milk and medicine. We heard from the community of Comerío where the community members organized brigades amongst each other to go into the mountains to rescue power lines and restore power after Hurricane Maria. We heard from activists who put their lives on the line to expel the U.S. Navy from Vieques, and who are now fighting cancer like many people from Vieques as a result of the toxic waste the U.S. Navy left on the island. I was surprised that everywhere we went people expressed such deep gratitude to us for our continued support in the Diaspora of all of their work. As an employee of The PRCC, I did not realize the extent to which our work in Chicago affects the island. The whole trip made me feel so proud to be a Puerto Rican, to work somewhere that has helped my beloved island in so many ways, and I felt inspired to work even harder to grow this movement in Puerto Rico towards self determination!

**Ignaiik Cruz:** El viaje fue muy interesante. Pude ver a partes de Puerto Rico que yo nunca había visto pero también fui a lugares donde yo me crié. Me enseñó el valor del café, de las amistades, y de las personas nuevas que nos enseñaron una humildad tremenda. Y también me enseñó el impacto que El PRCC ha hecho en los lugares con mayor necesidad y la gratitud que esas municipalidades tienen con lo que se le da.



Dr. Tahseen Siddiqui en The Baton Show Lounge

evento se llevó a cabo en The Baton Show Lounge, en la ciudad de Chicago. La noche contó con la presencia del Dr. Will Cobbs, Director de Iniciativas de Salud

Pública de dicha organización, Juan Calderón, Director de Operaciones de El Centro Cultural Puertorriqueño, el Dr.



El evento comenzó con una cena, para luego dar inicio con el programa de actividades pautadas para la noche. Unas palabras de



## Great Holiday Season for Businesses on Paseo Boricua: Thanks to Efforts of PRCC Small Business Development Center

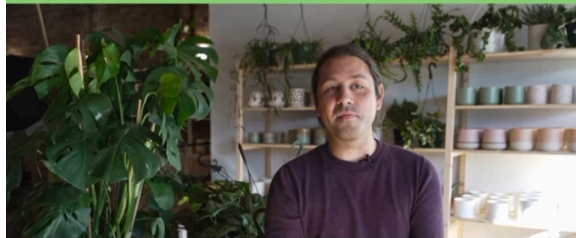
By *Xiomara Rodríguez*

This holiday season was a particularly special time for small businesses in Humboldt Park. The 2021 holiday season kicked off with Small Business Saturday and a Shop Small social media campaign that ran from November 27th (Small Business Saturday) to January 6th (Three Kings Day). The campaign, run by the SBDC at The Puerto Rican Cultural Center, was a hugely successful series of video interviews highlighting small businesses in Humboldt Park. The videos shined light on the deep roots of some of the most iconic Humboldt Park institutions like Café Colao and Municipal Market. They also promoted newer additions like Succulent City, Freshly Touched Salon, and Honeycomb Network. Videos showed images of Municipal Market from 40 years ago when they were the first Latin Frutería in Chicago, as owner Murad Farhan urges viewers to “keep your business where your family lives to support jobs, culture, and real people”. Marcus Kirby, owner of Succulent City, talks about his plant shop and the importance of shopping small, so your money goes back to the local economy rather than corporations that hoard profits. The SBDC at The Puerto Rican Cultural

Center filmed, edited, produced, and promoted the videos for the business owners completely free of charge. If you are thinking of starting a business or are already a business owner, please contact the SBDC at The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (+1 773-698-7233) for free business advising and resources!

laughter as they learned about Boricua culture, the vejigante, parranda music, and other unique Puerto Rican holiday traditions. At the same time, families enjoyed the holiday market at ¡WEPA! Mercado del Pueblo thereby supporting

**The Succulent City**  
**2540 W. Division St**



*Municipal Market 40 years ago*

Center promoted the videos for the business owners completely free of charge. If you are thinking of starting a business or are already a business owner, please contact the SBDC at The Puerto Rican Cultural Center (+1 773-698-7233) for free business advising and resources!



*Community youth enjoying the Paseo Boricua Tree Lighting*

Another highlight of this holiday brought to the community by the SBDC at The Puerto Rican Cultural Center was the first ever Paseo Boricua Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and holiday market at ¡WEPA! Mercado del Pueblo. This tree lighting ceremony was a special event with traditional parranda

local small businesses while getting all their holiday gifts such as organic hair/body care, raw honey, terrariums, Boricua handcrafted art, and much more. Small businesses are the soul of the Humboldt Park community, and it was a powerful show of solidarity this entire holiday season to see community members and organizations shop local.





## The Lisa Isadora Cruz Trans Empowerment Center Hosts Pillars Market



By Jayla Padilla

What is Pillars Market? It is a space

for POC vendors and artists of trans experience! The pillar is a symbol of support, stability and strength. Currently, Trans artists and vendors are in need of support, therefore the purpose of the Pillars Market is to create space for Black and Brown trans folks to showcase their work and create more visibility of the small businesses owned by these communities. Pillars not only represents the trans vendors and artists who are the foundations of the community by providing a space for their practices and art, but it also represents the people welcomed into the space to be pillars themselves by buying and helping vendors and artists grow.

The Pillars Market second installment will occur on Saturday, February 19th, from 2pm-6pm at the Lisa Isadora Cruz Transgender Empowerment Center at 2753 W Division St.

We are currently looking to fill up six more spots, so if you are Black and/or Brown and of Trans Experience, please let us know! We are providing chairs and tables! Additionally, keep a close lookout for our future posts as we will be highlighting our current vendors/artists!

Follow @transchicagoorg on Instagram for any updates on future events, or call (773) 698-7473 to reach out about any questions on our services and access to gender affirming care."

## Urban Theater: From Humboldt Park to Puerto Rico

By Iván Vega

This Spring, UrbanTheater Company (UTC) will travel to Puerto Rico to present LA GRINGA, the critically acclaimed play written by Carmen Rivera. Last year, LA GRINGA celebrated 25 years at Repretorio Español as the longest running off-Broadway Spanish-language production in New York City.



We are honored and grateful for this opportunity made possible through our ongoing partnership with CLATA (Chicago Latino Theater Alliance) and through our new partnership with Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña and their International Theater Festival. Performances will be held at Teatro Victoria Espinosa in Santurce April 7-10.

Visit UTC at [UrbanTheaterChicago.org](http://UrbanTheaterChicago.org)





# Show Your Love Here on Paseo Boricua

WITH ¡WEPA! MERCADO DEL PUEBLO  
2559 W. DIVISION STREET



## CELEBRATE YOUR LOVED ONES WITH:

- CUSTOM VALENTINE'S DAY GIFT BASKETS
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- VEGAN&ORGANIC BODY CARE
- LOCAL RAW HONEY
- JEWELRY
- BORICUA HAND CRAFTED GOODS
- VEGAN CHEESECAKE
- CLOTHING AND MEXICAN ARTISANRY
- WITH A PURCHASE OF \$20 PRIOR TO 02/14/22 WIN A CHANCE TO GET YOUR MAKEUP DONE FOR VALENTINE'S DAY WEEKEND FREE!



Mercado del Pueblo