



HISPANIC ASSOCIATION OF ATLANTIC COUNTY

2024 NUESTRO PUEBLO AWARDS HONOREES

Arts and Entertainment

Awarded to an individual who has made a significant contribution to our Hispanic community through their skills, leadership, or portrayal of Latinos in Arts & Entertainment.

Honoree: Jorge Restrepo



Jorge Restrepo-Zuleta was born in Andes, Antioquia, Colombia and raised in Medellín, Colombia. From a young age, he was passionate about graphic arts, music, and cultural education. He studied industrial mechanics, technical drawing, and industrial electricity before moving to the United States in 1989 and attending Atlantic Cape Community College. In the United States, he worked in casinos as a game supervisor and dealer, as well as a DJ, master of ceremonies, announcer, and journalist. Currently, Jorge is a successful entrepreneur and journalist in both Colombia and the United States. He owns the newspaper

"The Society Page en Español", which focuses on promoting Hispanic culture and heritage. He is also the driving force behind the Colombian Festival in Pleasantville, which celebrates the beauty and culture of Colombia. Jorge is married to Elsi Esther Matos and has two daughters, Angelina and Gianna.

Community Service

Awarded to an individual who has made a significant contribution to our community through volunteerism, as a provider of social services and/or promoting the welfare of others.

Honoree: Christian Solorzano



Christian Solorzano was born in Lima, Peru and immigrated to the United States to Pleasantville, NJ where he has resided for the last 30 years. Christian joined the Hermandad Del Señor De Los Milagros de Atlantic County In 2007, who mission aims to preserve the Peruvian cultural traditions. Christian became the organization's president in 2009 and again in 2024. Under his leadership, he dedicates his efforts to promote Catholicism and its rich traditions especially during the month of October for their much anticipated processions. He has also spearheaded alongside the Consulate the Peruvian Flag Raising Ceremony in Atlantic City and collaborated with Stockton University to showcase Peruvian heritage. Christian has also supported fundraising events for those in need

throughout multiple outreach initiatives. In addition to his community work, he is a local businessman who provides job opportunities for Latinos through his party rental supply business, “Party Things Rental”. Christian is known for his willingness to help others and is dedicated to advancing the Hispanic community.

Education

Awarded to an individual(s) at any level in the education system in Atlantic County that has made a significant contribution to our community through his/her skills, leadership, or advocacy on educational issues.

Honoree: Aurora Boyette



Aurora Boyette, a native of Cuba and longtime resident of Galloway Township, NJ, is a Spanish teacher at Absegami High School and an adjunct professor at Stockton University. She holds a BA in Biology from Stockton University and a Master of Arts in Teaching Spanish from Rutgers University.

During her 23 year tenure at Absegami High School, Aurora established the José Martí chapter of the Spanish Honor Society and the Spanish for Heritage Speakers program. In addition to her commitment to promoting the study of languages and cultures, Aurora is dedicated to providing her students with opportunities to use Spanish beyond the physical space of the classroom through service-learning.

Apart from her teaching responsibilities, Aurora is the Director of Educational Services for the ESL of America program at La Casa Dominicana of NJ. Prior to her collaboration with La Casa Dominicana, Aurora was a board member of the Hispanic Alliance of Atlantic County, where she served as information officer, vice-president, and chairperson of the Latino Youth Summit and the scholarship program.

Honoree: Heather Medina



Heather Medina's story is one of unwavering dedication to education with a particular focus on ensuring access to education. Growing up in Camden City, she began her academic journey at Woodrow Wilson High School and later pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree in Marketing from Stockton University. Heather returned to Camden City as a counselor for Aspira Inc. of NJ, where she positively impacted the lives of numerous students. Heather's passion for guiding and supporting students led her to Temple University, where she took on the role of Admissions Counselor. She has transformative tenure at LEAP Academy Charter School in Camden City, where she served as the Director of Pre-College Programs, playing a pivotal role in preparing students for higher education. Heather's educational journey came full circle when she returned to Stockton University to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Instructional Technology. At Stockton, she assumed the important responsibility of recruiting students, with a specific focus on Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) recruitment. Ms. Medina has achieved a remarkable milestone by becoming the first Latina in Stockton University's history of over 50

years to hold the position of Director of Admissions. This achievement stands as a significant step towards progress and inclusivity within the university community. Highlighting the importance of representation and diversity in leadership roles within educational institutions. During her 28 years in higher education, Ms. Medina has had a profound impact on the lives of students, helping them navigate the college admissions process and achieve their academic goals.

Entrepreneurship Nuestro Pueblo Award

Awarded to an individual in the field of business that has made a significant contribution to our community through his/her leadership in business, service, and providing professional opportunities to the Latino community.

Honoree: Ausdberto Flores



Ausdberto “Alberto” Flores is the owner of La Villita Latino food market in the heart of Atlantic City’s Latino Community. Prior to La Villita, this area was considered a food desert and fulfilled a desperate need for residents, especially those experiencing transportation issues. Alberto has several other businesses and is a constant supporter of Latino non-profit organizations, including HAAC. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Alberto’s La Villita, was a huge donor of food throughout the numerous HAAC food distributions for the community.

HAAC Board Member of the Year

This individual has made significant contributions to our community through their involvement on committees, leadership, and commitment to the mission and vision of the HAAC organization.

Honoree: Rafael Arango



Rafael Arango's story is one of resilience, determination, and community impact. Born in Oaxaca, Mexico, Rafael immigrated to Atlantic City at a young age and pursued his education at Rowan University, where he studied human resources and management. His experiences at university inspired him to become an entrepreneur, and he found his passion in digital media, marketing, and photography, building a strong client base across the United States over the span of ten years. Known as the "go-to guy" for non-profit organizations and privately owned businesses, Rafael never lost sight of his desire to give back to his community. He began his outreach work as an Outreach Coordinator at an elementary charter school, where he worked closely with Latino families. Later promoted to Communications Officer, fostering a strong relationship between the school and the community. Rafael subsequently took on the position of Multicultural Specialist for the City of Atlantic City, expanding his impact to the community. by promoting diversity, inclusion, and community engagement. Rafael sought meaningful change by volunteering on multiple boards for a number of non-profit organizations. Rafael served as Public Relations Officer of the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County, current board member of the Chicken Bone Beach Historical Foundation and board member of the Spanish Community Center and served on the

Atlantic City Early Childhood Advisory Council. In those capacities Rafael worked on Hispanic Heritage Month programming, AC Latino Festival, Jazz Festival, back-to-school drives, food distributions during the COVID-19 pandemic, toy drives, and more. His journey from immigrant to successful entrepreneur and community leader serves as an inspiration to others, showcasing the power of perseverance, passion, and a commitment to making a difference.

Healthcare Nuestro Pueblo Award

Awarded to a healthcare professional who embodies the characteristics of compassionate care, respects patients' values, culture, choices, and decisions, and understands the significance of educating our community with regard to the latest healthcare issues.

Honorees: Dr. Kirsy Japa



Dr. Kirsy Japa is a dedicated psychiatrist with a diverse background and a strong commitment to serving underserved communities. Originally from San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic, she attended medical school at Universidad Central Del Este (UCE) and has furthered her training in psychiatry at Cooper University Health Care and the University of Pennsylvania. Currently, Dr. Japa is a psychiatrist at AtlantiCare, providing psychiatric care at various facilities including the AtlantiCare Healthplex, a federally qualified healthcare facility (FQHC) catering to underserved populations. She is actively involved in teaching and supervising the next generation of psychiatrists. In addition to her clinical work, Dr. Japa is engaged in various community outreach activities. Dr. Japa is also a member of the AtlantiCare Latinos Moving Ahead (ALMA) employee resource group, where she volunteers her time to create an inclusive environment for the underserved and minority populations in the community. Her community engagement include volunteering to provide meals at the Beacon of Hope shelter and for the summer's meals program. She has also volunteered with HAAC in serving the Hispanic Community. Dr. Japa plans to continue to balance her clinical, teaching and making a positive impact on the lives of those in need, with finding new opportunities to focus on with her husband and 3 children.

Public Service

Awarded to an individual in public service including government employees, elected officials, law enforcement or in military services that has made a significant contribution to our community through his/her skill, leadership or advocacy of issues that affect the Latino community within the public sector.

Honoree: Captain Alex Cadavid, ACFD



Captain Alex Cadavid is a first-generation Colombian American who has dedicated 24 years of his life to serving the United States in the military. His service spanned both the United States Marine Corps (USMC) and the New Jersey Air National Guard (NJANG), where he retired with the rank of First Sergeant. In 2008, he transitioned to the Atlantic City Fire Department, where he has been actively involved in fire prevention, education, and recruitment efforts, with a particular focus on increasing minority representation within the department. Currently, Captain Cadavid serves in fire suppression as one of only 3 high ranking Latinos in the ACFD, holding the position of Captain of the 4th Platoon assigned to Ladder 1. He takes great pride in mentoring a new cohort of Latino firefighters, ensuring they have the support and guidance they need to excel in their roles. Giving back is a family affair; Captain Cadavid's wife, Stephanie Cadavid, is actively engaged with the local organization "Mighty Writers" and works as a nutritionist, helping Atlantic City youths, predominantly Latinos at Texas Ave school. They have three children, Aryanna Moya, Alex Jr., who is following in his father's footsteps in the military, and the youngest, Ava.

Nuestro Amigo/a Pueblo Award

Awarded to a non-Hispanic individual that has demonstrated devotion to the betterment of the Latino community through their work, special achievement(s) or service to the community.

Honoree: Donna M. DeCaprio



Donna M. DeCaprio is the President of UNITE HERE Local 54, representing more than 11,000 hospitality workers in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, with 55% of them being immigrants. She joined the union in 1987 as a bar-porter at Trop World and has held various positions, including 19 years as Financial Secretary Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer. In 2023, she made history by becoming the first female President in the Union's 107-year history. Donna also serves as the Executive Vice President of UNITE HERE International Union and is a member of the Executive Board of the NJ AFL-CIO and PA AFL-CIO Executive Council. Donna's achievements include establishing citizenship classes for more than 450 immigrant union members and their families. She also created a pandemic help hotline that assisted over 6,500 workers in filing unemployment claims and healthcare coverage. Donna is a passionate advocate for workers' rights, striving to empower members of Local 54, improve their standard of living, and ensure dignity and respect in the workplace. She holds a bachelor's degree from Stockton University and has advanced education on labor and union leadership. Donna has been a member of the United Way of Atlantic County Board of Directors for over 10 years and is deeply committed to her community. Donna and her family are proud residents of Atlantic County.

Nuestro Organizational Amigo/a Pueblo Award

Awarded to an organization that has demonstrated outstanding social responsibility to the Latino community through participation and support of issues, programs, or events relating to the Latin community or that has demonstrated a commitment to the advancement of Latinos in their organization.

Honoree: Atlantic City Electric - Organization of Latinos at Exelon (OLE)



OLE has played a significant role in advocating for and promoting programs within the Latino community, demonstrating a strong commitment to supporting diversity and inclusion. Members of OLE have been consistent supporters of HAAC, actively participating in fundraising events, such as Nuestro Pueblo, and volunteering at community events like the toy distribution for the Three Kings Day celebration. Their continuous involvement has made them an integral part of HAAC, helping to advance Hispanic cultural heritage and contribute to the overall development of the community. Their dedication and support have been instrumental in fostering a sense of unity and collaboration within the community. Atlantic City Electric has been a valuable community partner that prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion. Through initiatives such as the "Organization of Latinos at Exelon" (OLE), the company has shown a commitment to supporting employees from diverse backgrounds. Atlantic City Electric has also focused on creating opportunities for people of color to enter the utility industry through programs like the Atlantic City Infrastructure Program, which prepares minorities for careers in utilities. Additionally, the company offers the Spark summer internship program for high school students, providing valuable work experience and exposure to the industry. These efforts demonstrate Atlantic City Electric's dedication to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce.

STEM Nuestro Pueblo Award

Awarded to an individual in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or Mathematics who has made significant contributions through the advancement of their work, leadership, or in advocating opportunities for advancement of Latinos in STEM.

Honoree: Eva Rojas



Evangelist "Eva" Rojas is a manager of Substation and Services at Atlantic City Electric (ACE). Eva was born in the Dominican Republic and immigrated to the U.S. at age 12. She obtained a bachelors degree in electrical engineering from the City College of New York. She is passionate about inspiring and empowering individuals, particularly Latinas, to pursue technical fields and overcome barriers in male-dominated industries. Eva services as President of the ACE chapter of OLE (Organization of Latinos at Exelon) engaging others in promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and careers within the Hispanic community. Her commitment to supporting her community includes organizing events and initiatives that highlight the importance of STEM education and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Eva's own experiences as a Latinas overcoming challenges to pursue her dreams drives her as a leader and advocate. As a role model and mentor within the Hispanic community, she encourages others to pursue their interests and

achieve their goals. Her dedication, perseverance, and focus on STEM serve as a shining example of how individuals can create pathways for success and advancement within underrepresented communities. Eva Rojas embodies the spirit of resilience and empowerment, using her platform to uplift and support others in their journeys.