

Mid-City charter school aims to draw Latino students

BYLINE: Ana Gershanik

SECTION: NEW ORLEANS PICAYUNE; Nuestro Pueblo; Pg. 6

LENGTH: 587 words

A new charter school will open Aug. 20 at 4407 S. Carrollton Ave., the site of the former A.D. Crossman Elementary School in Mid-City. The Esperanza Charter School is hoping to attract Latino children who attended Crossman before Hurricane Katrina.

"Esperanza" means hope, and the school will be operated by the **United Neighborhood Organization** of Chicago, known as UNO, which operates several schools in Chicago.

"La educacion de nuestros hijos es nuestra mejor esperanza" (The education of our children is our best hope) is the motto of the school, which will serve all the children of the area. The curriculum will be entirely in English and there will be special English immersion programs for Spanish-speaking students.

The Esperanza Charter School "seeks to redefine the culture and expectations of public education by demonstrating that all students, regardless of their income level or ethnicity, can learn," said principal Jacob Perez.

The Mid-City school will serve 261 students in grades kindergarten through 8. Programs will include a "Back to Basics" core curriculum, a highly structured learning environment based on a discipline code and special enrichment opportunities.

Perez said that of the 170 students who've enrolled, 95 are Hispanic. UNO decided to open the school after hearing stories about the flow of Latino families to the New Orleans area after Katrina. The school will have English-as-a-second-language teachers and will offer foreign-language courses.

While the flood-damaged school site is being renovated, Perez and members of his educational staff have been operating out of Jesuit High School, one block from the new school. They will be registering students at Grace Episcopal Church, 3700 Canal St., and are holding information forums at sites across town. For information call (504) 251-1008.

.

Congratulations to professor Raquel Cortina, former head of the vocal program at the University of New Orleans, who will be honored by the Young Leadership Council as one of its 2007 role models on Aug. 11 at the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel.

.

Colleen Robinson and Eliana McCaffery, local coordinators for Academic Year in America, are looking for families to host international students during the coming school year. Boys and girls, 15 to 18, will come from South America in August to attend high school in New Orleans for one semester or the full school year.

For information call Robinson at (504) 897-0207.

.

Addressing a persistent gap in minority children's reading scores, Reading Is Fundamental Inc. has launched the RIF multicultural literacy campaign to promote and support early childhood literacy in African-American, Hispanic and Native American communities.

RIF's multiyear campaign, supported by Macy's, provides parents and caregivers of children under the age of 5 with new educational resources for building children's language skills.

In collaboration with media partners Univision Communications Inc., the leading Spanish-language media company in the U.S., and Radio One Inc., RIF will air a public education campaign beginning in August.

Initial components include RIF's Leading to Reading Web site, www.rif.org, a free online educational resource in English and Spanish to help parents and caregivers develop the language skills of infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

The interactive site offers stories, nursery rhymes and other activities for adults to experience with young children.

.

Ana Gershanik can be reached at Anagersh@aol.com

LOAD-DATE: July 19, 2007

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

PUBLICATION-TYPE: Newspaper