



# PARA LOS NIÑOS Connections



Para Los Niños Presents: The Human Resources Team  
(L-R; Alex Vasquez, Mayra Flores, Edith Medina, Rosanna Velarde, Maria deBasil)



## Family Corner



### Downtown Art Gallery Shows Work of PLN Parents

*Senderos mothers on opening night of the downtown exhibit.*

Flashing lights adorned the entry way of a hip Downtown Los Angeles art gallery when guests sashayed to the opening night of a contemporary exhibit. Neither Jeff Koons nor Basquiat were the evening's stars but rather a group of proud Senderos mothers who contributed artwork in various forms to the "Mis Propios Espacios/Our Own Spaces" exhibit.

The PLN parents participated in a new program, launched during September's Art Walk, which offered visitors rare glimpses into their daily lives through hand-crafted textile work, video testimonies and heartfelt letters.

## New Leadership for the New School Year

The school year is well under way at Para Los Niños with new additions and changes across the leadership team at our charter schools. Each of our charters begins this year with a new principal: Juan Carlos Ramirez at Gratts Primary Center, Dr. Santa Acuña at Charter Elementary School, and Sandy Mejia at Charter Middle School.



*Gratts Primary Center Principal  
Juan Carlos Ramirez*

Gratts Principal Juan Carlos Ramirez served as Assistant

Principal at our middle school and primary center last school year. "I've had the good fortune to work with two of our schools-- and being tapped as principal is truly a dream come true. I look forward to continuing to serve the community by doing the best we can-- from the teachers to the main office staff," Juan Carlos said.

At the Charter Elementary School, Dr. Santa Acuña comes to PLN with more than 15 years of administrative and teaching experience in the Lennox School District, most recently as assistant principal at Lennox Middle School. "I'm proud to come on board as this organization is a beacon with an ever-evolving commitment to LA's underserved children and their families," said Santa.

Our new Charter Middle School principal Sandy Mejia comes to PLN with a decade of experience working in charter schools, most recently at the Alliance for College Ready Schools, where she was principal of Alliance College-Ready Middle Academy 9. "I look forward to working with the school community and finding the best ways to make sure our students are equipped with the tools necessary to achieve success in school and life, especially in a technology-driven society," said Sandy.

In addition to new schools-site leadership, the Charter School team led by Superintendent Dr. Drew Furedi, has added Brian Lucas as Director of Instructional Support, a new position focused on professional development support for teachers, principals and others working with PLN students. Brian comes to us after many years as an LAUSD administrator, where he spearheaded the efforts to unfurl teacher evaluations, beginner teachers programs and professional development for seasoned educators.

Moreover, Chris Coyle has joined as Director of Special Education, a newly formed position and department. Chris has a background as a teacher and a SpEd leader with a specialization in Speech and Language Pathology throughout the Los Angeles region. The team is rounded out by School Psychologist Pamela Brintrup, and Arlene Martinez, as the Speech and Language Pathologist Assistant.

Additionally, Diana Rodriguez, who is now our Charter Schools Operations Coordinator, is hard at work supporting all three schools with compliance, systems and operations. Diana previously served as the Office Manager at the Charter Middle School.

To help develop a more robust After School Program across our campuses, Fernando DelGadillo is settling into a new role as the Program Manager, working closely with its department director Cecilia Hernandez. Prior to his new post, Fernando had been the FLC Site Supervisor for five years. Karla Larawill steps up to Site Supervisor for the Gratts Primary Center program. She has held

Together, these elements were used to chronicle journeys of belonging to a migrant labor workforce, learning a new language, and keeping homeland traditions alive while planting roots in a foreign land.

"This gallery is a conduit for an unfiltered storytelling often overlooked. Our madres had the rare opportunity to share thoughts, hopes and fears while giving us a wider peek into their lives that would otherwise go unacknowledged," said Dr. Sheena Nahm, Senderos Program Director.

The insightful and vulnerable parent-focused gallery exhibit is located at 431 South Broadway, running through October 29th and open Monday-Friday from 11am-3pm.

"Mis Propios Espacios/Our Own Spaces" was made possible by its host gallery Downtown Art Center, the LA-based printmaking shop Self Help Graphics, and the Exceptional Children's Foundation.

### **Staff Spotlight: PLN Promotes Gabby**



Para Los Niños is proud to congratulate Gabby Herrera on her recent promotion to Director of Compliance & Risk. In her new role, Gabby will develop a larger compliance and safety strategy across the PLN network. Gabby previously served as the Compliance

roles as both an Associate and Lead Teacher throughout her years with the organization.

"We are grateful to have been able to attract such a strong team of educators to Para Los Niños and the communities we serve," said Drew. "Our mission is to help children gain access to the quality education and services they'll need to build successful, happy lives and our team's expansion is a vital step in that direction."

## FOX's Back to School Surprise

The first day of school is always exciting-- bustling carpool traffic rushing to beat the school bell, teachers adding final touches to their seating charts, and students across the city anxiously wondering how much homework they'd be assigned. However, this year, the summer sun had some company when greeting our students-- a fleet of FOX employees flocked to our campuses and surprised each child with backpacks stocked with school supplies.

The opening day give-away distributed over 750 school bags to every student to make sure they kicked-off the academic year with the supplies they need to learn. Brimming with pencils, crayons, washable markers, notebooks and binders, the donation sent waves of children through the hallways beaming with smiles and tears of joy.



Charter Elementary student with a FOX backpack.

"We're honored to partner with Para Los Niños. Its track record of transforming lives echoes our commitment of supporting LA's neediest communities and most heartfelt causes," said Mike Bayless, Vice President of Employee Communications & Activities.

Now, while the coolness factor of homework is always up for debate among our students, one thing that is certain is that thanks to FOX, the new supplies will make the load a little easier to handle.

## DreamWorks Animation Artist-in-Residence Installation at the Charter Elementary School

Coordinator.

This fall, she'll head the new Safety Committee to engage our departments and programs to think deeper about safety while creating safer workplaces by outfitting all PLN sites with disaster relief kits. Additionally, she'll have expanded responsibilities in managing the organization's annual audits and governance.

"I'm honored by this opportunity and I look forward to expanding the organization's safety plan to ensure our sites are operating at maximum safety and we exceed review standards on all our audits," said Gabby. "November will mark my fifth anniversary with this organization and I am proud to help continue its legacy," she added.

Gabby's office is located on the main floor.

New Team Members (Through 9/30)		
Name	Position	Department
Oliver DelGado	Director of Communications	Development
Celeste Anlauf	Director of Donor Relations	Development Department
Leslie Wheatle	Associate Teacher	Head Start
Melania Sanchez	Head Teacher	Head Start
Susan Stanchfield	Teacher	Gratts Primary Center
Margarita Alvarado	Teacher	Charter Middle School

As the new school year begins, the state of the arts is once again thriving across our campuses with the help of our DreamWorks Animation Artist-in-Residence, an innovative professional development program that provides PLN schools with an on-site artist to help teachers and students.



*Claire reviewing the art pieces from proud charter elementary student.*

Claire Joseph, our continuing artist-in-residence, is preparing students to visually express themselves by pairing their curriculum-based knowledge with the visual tools to help them creatively flourish. "It is really about giving the kids a lot of autonomy to learn and work together, while encouraging them to take what they've learned and share it visually with their peers and as a group," said Joseph. "They are smart and their talent is immense. It is interesting that the more you leave them to it, the better the results."

In collaboration with the faculty, Claire is exploring Art History as a broader unit of study to boost creativity and curricular goals. "Previously, our teachers had imaginative ideas but just not enough classroom time to realize them," added Claire. "This year, we'll use P.D. time to outline innovative lesson plans and finalize projects further in advance."

Claire has worked on educational projects at the Royal Academy of Arts in London; the Otis School of Fashion Design and the Museum of Contemporary Art, among others. Thanks to DreamWorks Animation Charitable Foundation, PLN students get an Arts infusion like no other.

## 'Model' Students Run Full S.T.E.A.M Ahead With Ford Motor Company

This past summer, Ford Motor Co. gave our Charter Middle School students a challenge: construct a functioning concept truck modeled after the Ford F-150-- but it had to be able to travel at least 25 yards, and transport students in the process.



*Charter Middle School students and Ford volunteers display their model trucks.*

Jesse Balderas	Teacher	Charter Middle School
Cynthia Hernandez	Teacher	Charter Elementary School
Graecia Arriaza	Therapist	Clinical Services
Rosario Ladera	Associate Teacher	After School Program
Edith Honorato	Associate Teacher	After School Program
Tatiana Calderon	Associate Teacher	After School Program
Josefa Carmona	Associate Teacher	After School Program
Ivette Leon	Associate Teacher	After School Program
Sara Lizola	Associate Teacher	After School Program
Wendy Hernandez	Teacher Assistant	Charter Elementary School
Estela Hernandez	Resource Facilitator	Senderos
Carina Mendez Hernandez	Resource Facilitator	Senderos
Zoila Aleman	Resource Facilitator	Senderos
Yulisa Orozco	Resource Facilitator	Senderos
Veronica Ferguson	Resource Facilitator	Senderos
Rebecca Garcia	Case Manager	Family Services
Guadalupe Murillo	Teacher	Head Start
Eata Bochnik	Teacher	Head Start
Rocio Fernandez	Teacher	Head Start
Citlali Ramos	Teacher	Head Start
Veronica Cabrera	Teacher	Head Start
Nune Menejyan	Teacher	Head Start

Delanie Espinoza	Teacher	Head Start
Marybel Mancinas	Teacher	Head Start

Forty students divided into five teams with each designing the mechanics and aesthetics of their respective vehicles. After days of revising sketches, and with the help of mentors from Ford, each of the teams built trucks that supported a driver's weight and were able to traverse the central courtyard of the Charter Middle School campus.

"I like the fact that we get to use our brains and be physical at the same time" said Ashley, an eighth grader. "It's rewarding to see our imagination at work-- and have what began as a sketch then come to life," a shared sentiment among all the students who participated in the project.

"It is part of Ford's DNA - to volunteer and contribute to the community. We want to make sure that students have the opportunity to build a love for learning and grow inspired to become innovators" said Debra Hotaling, Communications Manager at Ford.

Project materials were provided by the non-profit organization T4T, which recycles discarded industrial parts for use in the classroom.

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**If you have story ideas for us or would like further information please contact:**

Oliver DelGado  
Communications Director Para Los Niños  
500 Lucas Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90017  
email: [odelgado@paralosninos.org](mailto:odelgado@paralosninos.org) [www.paralosninos.org](http://www.paralosninos.org)

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