

## **College-going possibility stressed at 8th Annual Chavez Youth Conference at Sierra College**

**By Martin E. Martinez of Vida en el Valle / Sacramento Bee**

ROCKLIN -- Ana María Carrizales' biggest wish is to see the day that her 15-year-old daughter Gloria attends college even though she realizes that may be difficult because the family does not have the financial resources. But Carrizales is not giving up because she knows, thanks to many, that in California it is easy to attend a university. It is just a matter of investigating. "I know, because they have told me, that there are government loans and scholarships that universities offer, but I have no idea where I can go talk to someone about it," said Carrizales.

Last Saturday, the mother of two other children, finally got her chance to get that information. Now, she feels more motivated and sure. Carrizales attended the eighth annual César E. Chávez Leadership Conference, where various university representatives and counselors offered all types of information, as much for students as for parents, for obtaining financial assistance that allows them to have the resources to attend college. "The number of scholarships available is incredible," said Carrizales. "Now I know what I need to do so that my daughter can go to college, and I'm sure that it will happen. "Like her, over 800 students from various high schools and middle schools showed up at the Chávez conference, which included various workshops and information discussions that focused on opportunities to attend college.

The event, which was held at Sierra College, was held in celebration of the 80th anniversary of the farmworker leader. The conference drew students from sixth grade through high school who also enjoyed various cultural and artistic presentations. The invited speaker was California State University, Sacramento president Alejandro González, who spoke about Chávez's legacy and the commitment he always had for education.

"Even though César Chávez was a labor leader, he was always concerned and fought so that all students had access to attend a university because he believed that education was the key to the success of the community," said González in an auditorium filled to capacity. He added that Chávez always promoted the idea that education was a responsibility that every one should undertake, and that that idea has inspired other leaders from this country and throughout the world. That is why González, following the example and legacy of Chávez, invited the audience to get involved in education because that is the only way to achieve professional and personal success. "I am an example that when you want, and make it a goal, you can achieve the desired targets," said González, referring to the obstacles that his parents had to face in providing an education for their children. In talking about the Latino community in California, González added that the number of students who graduate from a university is very low in comparison to other groups, and that those who finish high school is even lower.

"We don't want a Latino community without preparation; we want them to graduate. Education in the state is available for everyone. One must take advantage of those opportunities available." González said that in California, about 15,000 Latinos graduate annually from a university. A pair of local community college president's also gave welcome addresses in the morning as well as Catholic Diocese Bishop Jaime Soto. During one of the workshops, which were held in English and Spanish, counselors offered discussions with parents in which they stressed that the most important thing is to maintain a dialogue with their children about their preferred university.

"Talk with your children, reach an agreement and both should find and get close to the universities. The opportunities are there, it's only a question of you asking," said Adolfo Mercado, director of the Upward Bound program at Yuba College. Rodrigo Sotero, a senior at Oakmont High School in Roseville, was sure that he now has a wide panorama of what is needed to go to a university, thanks to a workshop that helped dispel his doubts.

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"Now I know it is not so difficult to attend a university. Everything depends on the effort you give. The main thing is that you apply to many universities at once and surely one will accept you," said Sotero, who wants to study business administration. Among the organizations that provided information and workshops were the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, California Latino School Boards Association, Latino Peace Officers Association, Sacramento Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Latino Issues Forum, National Council of La Raza, Golden 1 Credit Union, SEIU Local 1000 and the Classified School Employees Association.

During the eight-hour conference, the entertainment included the Ballet Folkloric de Woodland with trickroper James Barrera, Sierra College student dance group, Mariachi Tonantzin, Paloma Negra folk band, rock group Beneath the Iron Heel and Kaiser Educational Theater's production of "Secrets." Robert C. Cooley Middle School and the Hispanic Empowerment Association of Roseville plans to host the event next year on March 21, 2009 and on March 20, 2010. Contact Rene Aguilera, Conference Coordinator at 916-532-5998 or at [www.hear2000.org](http://www.hear2000.org) - Copyright 2008 – Vida en el Valle / Sacramento Bee