



*"Empowering Latino Families through Education"
"Fortaleciendo las Familias Latinas a través de la Educación"*

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Mission and Purpose: Given Escuela Bolivia's commitment to children and families in our community, I am nominating the organization to the 2011 Partnership for Peace Program. Escuela Bolivia was founded by Bolivian families who sought to meet the educational needs of the Greater DC Region's growing Latino population. Since 1998, the nonprofit has worked to empower thousands of underserved Latino families—*of all origins*—through education and leadership development as well as advance cross-cultural understanding in the broader community through its various programs:

Academic Language Programs offers ESL and Spanish classes to children and adults in a multicultural and inclusive environment. Student demographics include 53% Latino, 31% Caucasian, 11% African, 3% Asian, and 2% represent other groups. About 50% of students receive some form of financial assistance. The children's Spanish curriculum is aligned to the Virginia Department of Education's science standards to ensure students are developing their language skills and building their intellectual capacity in a core academic area. Believing that cross-cultural understanding is a critical life skill, the program offers students the opportunity to discover each other's cultural backgrounds by including lessons on the many countries they represent. The ESL program is based on partner organization REEP's research-based and proven ESL curriculum. In 2010-11:

- 50% of the 160 children served will demonstrate improved Spanish proficiency and academic skills included in the Arlington County curriculum.
- 25% of the 60 ESL students served will significantly advance their English proficiency, based on the Virginia Department of Education's ESL standards.

Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) provides comprehensive leadership development to build youth's leadership and academic abilities, ensuring they are prepared to attend



and excel in college—many times as the first in their family. Workshops include learning about effective time management, study skills, and public speaking; participating in university visits; and interacting with young adult, professional mentors who offer guidance in the college application process. Community-service is a key focus of the program. Students engage in volunteer projects that include planting gardens at local schools; renovating group homes for elderly community members; and collecting non-perishable food to donate to food banks. Students in ELP are low-income Latino high school students from the Greater DC area that represent a diversity of countries of origin that include Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico. In 2010-11:

- 70% of the 50 students served, *who are scheduled for graduation*, will be accepted into a higher education institution. Further, 90% of students will participate in a community-service project.

Parent Leadership Initiative (PLI) prepares hundreds of Latino parents each year to become advocates for their children's education by improving communication in the home and strengthening involvement in schools and in the community. Participants become part of a growing network of parents who learn from and support each other as they discover how to navigate and participate in the U.S. school system. In 2010-11:

- 50% of the 150 parents served will become more involved in their children's education by regularly communicating with their educators and participating in school and community activities.

Involvement with RPCV/w: From early on in its history the organization has benefitted from the leadership of RPCVs. Two RPCVs sit on its Board of Directors' Executive Committee. Immediate Past President, Dr. Kathie Panfil and Treasurer, Robert Panfil's dedication to service began 30 years ago when they each found their calling in education and international development as Peace Corps volunteers in Venezuela. An expert in bilingual education, Kathie continued on to teach children around the world while Robert worked as an economist at the World Bank in mainly transportation and urban and water sectors throughout Latin America, South Asia, and the South Pacific. Kathie has been instrumental in program development since 2004 and Robert has meticulously managed the organization's finances since 2005. In addition, RPCVs have served as mentors in the ELP program and participated in the organization's graduation ceremonies and community events.

As the nominator for this application and Executive Director of the organization, I am a member of RPCV/w who served in the departments of Santa Cruz and Cochabamba, Bolivia from 2002-2005. I am also a first-generation immigrant and beneficiary of an ESL education, and deeply value Escuela Bolivia's mission to empower Latino families through education and leadership development through programs that also cultivate an appreciation of different cultures in our community. I am eager to support the organization's growth with my expertise in communications, fundraising, and education—and seek to involve more RPCVs in our work. I joined RPCV/w shortly after my move to Washington, DC back in 2007.

Need for RPCV/w Assistance: A partnership with RPCV/w would come at a critical time as the need for programs that support at-risk groups to thrive is greatest during a weak economy. All too real are the statistics that point out that 45% of the United States' 47 million Latinos face acute economic pressures due to the downturn in the economy. In fact, some of the families we reach have an annual household income of



less than \$10,000 and others less than \$20,000. Many families have at least one parent who is currently unemployed. Beyond the anecdotal, in Arlington, data shows that English language learners (ELLs), the majority of whom are Latino, have experienced much higher job losses due to the economic downturn that is reflected in an unemployment rate of 28%. Yet, despite these challenges, our families place a high value on education and continue to enroll in our programs.

To help families cope with these challenges, Escuela Bolivia welcomes the support of RPCV/w in the following areas:

Volunteers: Escuela Bolivia was volunteer-led for its first seven years of existence and to this day relies on countless volunteers in all areas of operations to achieve its mission. RPCV/w members will be encouraged to become part of Escuela Bolivia's volunteer network. Opportunities include:

- Mentors for the Emerging Leaders Program to support high-school youth's college aspirations
- Qualified teachers and experienced teacher assistants for year-round Spanish and ESL Classes
- Office support, including answering phones, making photocopies, running errands, and helping with annual mailings
- Technology support, including supporting the maintenance of the organization's new computer lab with the possibility of offering a basic technology course in Spanish to parents in our Parent Leadership and ESL programs
- Babysitters to take care of and tutor children whose parents are involved in our ESL and Parent Leadership programs

Fundraising: Despite recent successes and new executive leadership, the organization has experienced a decrease in funding from former key funders who are unable to provide support for the organization due to the economic crisis. In a period when the harsh economic reality has taken a toll on low-income Latino families, Escuela Bolivia needs the support of well-connected and well-respected organizations such as RPCV/w who can offer us a multitude of communication and fundraising opportunities to promote our cause to a wider audience. We are hoping that by being selected, RPCV/w will support our fundraising efforts by raising Escuela Bolivia's profile through promoting our work to RPCV/w members and partners, providing or connecting us to speaking and networking opportunities, and actively participate in our annual fundraising gala and events.

RPCV/w Membership: As mentioned, I am an RPCV/w member. In many ways I am promoting Peace Corps 3rd Goal through my work at Escuela Bolivia, whose programs give members of our community—whether they are students, volunteers, board members, or supporters—the opportunity to have a better understanding of other people from around the world. It is my hope that RPCV/w will invite us to present our work at the general membership meeting in November 2010 so that other RPCVs learn about us and are inspired to give back to our community through Escuela Bolivia's family-focused, high-quality programs.