



LEARNING ABOUT THE NATIONAL HISPANIC INSTITUTE

ABOUT NHI'S FOUNDER



Ernesto Nieto is founder and president of the National Hispanic Institute (NHI) and continues to be a central force in the organization's series of Latino youth initiatives 34 years later. It was his vision that leadership development be made an integral experience in the life of as many Latino youth as possible. He personally witnessed the impact that leadership had on the thinking of young people from tough neighborhoods through the efforts of his parents back in Houston many years ago. It became his intent to expand the work and make leadership a means through which young people would aspire to attend top colleges and see themselves as well educated future leaders in Latino community life. And while this work has now expanded throughout the United States and to several Latin

American countries, the most noteworthy outcome to date has been in the development of an organization that is primarily sustained by students and their parents. No one feels more strongly than the founder that every student who attends an NHI program must receive the highest quality services possible and come to see their experience with the organization as being an important turning point in their lives. A former educator, state, and federal official, Ernesto founded NHI in 1979. He is a graduate of Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas and has been awarded numerous awards, honorary doctoral degrees, and is working on publishing his third book this summer.



WHERE IS NHI LOCATED

NHI is nestled among the rolling hills of rural central Texas in a mostly Latino community called Maxwell, approximately eight miles east of San Marcos. The Victorian mansion on the property was constructed in 1903 and was once part of a 5,000 acre ranch that mostly grew cotton. Ernesto and his wife Gloria de Leon purchased the original homestead of 50 acres in 1985 and contributed the land and the mansion to NHI. A 3,200 square foot retreat home is also located on the property along with a smaller ranch office that the staff uses for their work.



Once difficult to access from Austin, the newly constructed TX 130 toll road that runs from North Austin to San Antonio is only three minutes from NHI. More recently a 12,000 home community was announced for construction only a $\frac{1}{2}$ mile away. According to reports it will have 2 golf courses available to the public. Also a connecting loop is on the drawing board that will make for easy travel between I.H. 35 and 130, turning Maxwell from a small isolated, rural community to a bustling suburban area for growing families. Still with these developments, plans are to keep NHI laid back, connecting the old with the new, and making the setting student and family friendly as a national training center.

NHI TRAINING PROGRAMS

NHI training programs are designed to be high-intensity and high-impact in their makeup; requiring high concentration. Whether the Great Debate for high school freshmen, the Lorenzo de Zavala Youth Legislative Session for sophomores, or the Collegiate World Series for juniors, NHI programs are all designed with specific purposes in mind:

- Stimulate their capacities to think and organize their thoughts in the abstract;
- Increase their effectiveness in speech communications;
- Provide them with a framework for personal and social analysis;
- Improve their capacities to collaboratively problem solve;
- Place them in intellectually competitive environments causing them to perform at peak levels;
- Influence their leadership thinking with the capacities to impact the lives of others;
- Make college a normal expectation in their development;
- Broaden their social networks with peers who value higher education and wish to be successful;
- Increase their knowledge of leadership as a strategy to change communities and lives; and
- Make leadership in the Latino community an important aspiration in their lives.



Of course, each program is different and each project works towards the accomplishment of different goals and objectives. One experience without the other is similar to believing that education should stop at the elementary school level. Parents are strongly encouraged to insist that their children participate in each of NHI's highly specialized experiences that begin at the ninth grade and continue through undergraduate studies.

NHI'S BUSINESS MODEL

One of our most important goals as an organization is to keep our student fees within reach of family pocketbooks. To achieve this end, we work in close partnership with colleges and universities that underwrite the costs of food, housing, and facility use. Not all universities are full hosts. Some are only partial, but those

that do allow NHI to keep its costs down to one-third that of what similar weekend and weeklong programs charge. Most parents will see summer leadership programs range from \$1,500 to as high as \$3,000 for a weeklong experience. NHI's large access to volunteers as well as its strong relations with key colleges and universities makes it possible to maintain its student registration fees no higher than \$755 which is the cost of the organization's most expensive program, the eight-day LDZ. The Great Debate and Collegiate World Series are at the \$600 level, while Celebración is slightly over \$300.





THE WORK OF VOLUNTEERS

Much like host colleges and universities, volunteers play big roles in the success of NHI programs. Former high school and college participants annually assist with student outreach and recruitment. High school counselors and teachers also play a big role. In some cases, school districts and private high schools underwrite as much as half or the full cost of a student participating. During the summer, adult alumni play key trainer roles along with college students who participate in various organizational functions. The combined efforts of over 1,200 volunteers a year give NHI an outreach capacity and presence matched by few organizations.

NHI'S ANNUAL PROGRAM PROCESS

NHI aligns its youth programs in a manner that allows them to enjoy and experience a continuum of well-structured learning experiences. Student outreach begins in September of each calendar year and continues through January. In October, Celebración takes place in San Antonio for the top 800 finalists from the previous summer. During February, volunteer certification begins and continues into early March. March, April, and May are training months for NHI's Great Debate programs for freshmen participants. June and July are heavy periods for NHI in that sixteen summer initiatives take place at various college campus sites scattered throughout the United States and Panama. August is often reserved for local community student recognition events as well as planning for the new year. In total, over 4,000 youth participate in NHI leadership programs. These include 1,200 volunteers who receive training throughout the year; 1,000 high school freshmen; 850 high school sophomores, 350 high school juniors; and 800 high school and college students who attend Celebración as a fall project. Participants represent over 400 high schools, 18 states, and three Latin American countries and Puerto Rico.

STUDENT SAFETY AND SECURITY

The safety and well-being of all persons who attend our programs are chief concerns and priorities of the National Hispanic Institute. Travel schedules are carefully coordinated with parents to ensure that representatives are present when students arrive at their respective destinations by plane, bus, or train. Similar efforts take place to make certain that students arrive at departure stations in plenty of advance time to avoid expensive stay overs. While at programs special measures are taken to ensure that participants eat three meals a day, consume plenty of water, and receive sufficient rest. Male and female participants are housed in separate facilities and provided ample supervision. In the event of inadvertent medical emergencies, special staff members are assigned to transport students to the nearest medical facility for prompt, professional attention. Prior to attending a summer program, parents are asked to advise NHI of any special medical concerns or medications that their children need to take while at a program. Possession of weapons, tobacco, alcohol or any illegal substance is cause for immediate expulsion from all NHI programs and notification of the proper authorities and adherence to all laws.

NHI STAFF

Because of modern technology, large contingencies of staff are not needed. Instead, the organization maintains a small, well educated, energetic, and computer savvy staff who move rapidly and work long hours. All NHI staff members are college graduates with several having advanced degrees or working towards earning them. They are also diverse in their makeup; similar to the communities they serve. These are the individuals who annually

marshal volunteers, work with high school counselors, answer parent questions, track family payment plans, and ensure that student applicants meet the organization's academic criteria for admission. They also marshal program staff during the year, conduct certification training, and make sure that field volunteers and staff are well prepared for their jobs in their work with young people.

NHI's ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION INITIATIVE

We have long realized that fees paid by families are insufficient when weighed against the costs of operating NHI and especially in addressing its planned growth needs. Program fees go directly to the service requirements of the students. These fall in five main categories: a) student outreach and recruitment services; b) student record management services; c) student curriculum development and research services; d) student training and management services; and e) student supplies, equipment and facility services. This year, special efforts are being made in reaching out to former participants who as working professionals can have a significant impact on strengthening the organization's financial capacities to grow and expand its reach. To achieve this end, Celebración was established as a financial initiative designed to attract contributors and sponsors who see the work and wish to play important support roles. This year, for instance, students will participate in a first-time "class gift" initiative as a means of training

them in philanthropy. Older alumni in the business and professional world are receiving requests to become part of the organization's Board of Benefactors Project as annual contributors. And special efforts are also underway to expand NHI's business sponsors. Now parents can participate while educating their children on the importance of stewardship by also joining this effort through their gifts both small and large. Visit with our development office on this matter and if you can and wish to be included in our 2013 efforts, we would love nothing better than to see you join us as we endeavor together to make leadership an integral experience in the lives of our young.



FOUR PILLARS OF COMMUNITY LEARNING

NHI has long identified the four main pillars of learning in society as being our educational institutions, religious/faith institutions, family institutions, and community/civic institutions. We all know that our educational institutions are undergoing drastic change from our public schools to institutions of higher learning. Producing a skilled workforce in response to a modern day economy appears to now occupy center stage at the expense of other character building experiences that student once enjoyed. Our church institutions are also experiencing difficulties in maintaining strong, contributing congregations as they age against a backdrop of one-third of U.S. Americans that no longer belong to any church at all. At the same time family life is becoming increasingly challenging as both parents find themselves having to work full time jobs just to make ends meet and provide their children with basic essentials. And with families moving about more frequently, the older practices of having grandparents and other relatives within easy reach to help correct and guide the younger ones has likewise disappeared. In today's modern day world, close mentoring relations between parents and their children have been reduced to less than five minutes a day. And in this small sliver of time, most of the communications has to do with the life management duties of going to bed early, doing homework, getting off the phone, and keeping bedrooms clean.

Finally, community institutions that once played important roles in shaping the lives of our youth no longer exist. It used to be that our boys and girls could walk to the nearest youth center and enjoy a game of basketball,

participate in a community sponsored event, or even become part of a campaign to improve neighborhood life. Those opportunities have been replaced with centers for troubled youth, soup kitchens, and other forms of emergency care for indigent families.

NHI was established as a newly formed community institution that engages youth in self learning, advancing their prospects for college, and makes participation in community life a means of producing future leaders. We practice family values and always encourage parents to be full participants in our work. And while we are do not lean one way or another for a particular religion, we certainly realize the importance of having a strong spiritual foundation as a means of influencing the moral and ethical conduct development of our young people.

SUMMARY

Now you understand our vision, the importance of our work, and how we go about serving our young people. Great communities and societies are built around fostering the development of the best minds possible. We do this working directly with families and with the support offered by our schools. We do not look to government or the charity of others to support this mission. We do, however, encourage the participation of people who wish to invest in our young and see the necessity for strong stewardship as the chief means of ensuring that the support needed comes directly from our pockets and not anyone else. To do otherwise sends a wrong message to our young and makes them even more susceptible to the kinds of social tags that disable the human spirit rather than inspire personal excellence.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you ever have a question, concern, or need additional information please feel free to visit our website at <http://www.nhi-net.org>. You can visit that site for payments, fundraising information, and conference planning information. Also, visit our YouTube channel "NHITV" for videos and mini-documentaries. Our central office in Maxwell is open daily, Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM - 12:00 PM CST, 1:30 - 6:00 PM CST.

