

# Center for Youth Leadership

Why wait for someone else to make a difference?

## “THROUGH THEIR EYES I SEE MY FAMILY.” HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF DAY LABORERS IN NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

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"Through Their Eyes I See My Family."  
Health Care Needs of Day Laborers in Norwalk, Connecticut

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Center for Youth Leadership  
Peace Project  
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The mission of the Center for Youth Leadership is to promote and support youth activism through grantmaking, public awareness activities, volunteer programs, and social change campaigns.

The Center for Youth Leadership is based at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk. Schools that have adopted our model of youth activism are Greenwich High School, Stamford High School, Westhill High School, and Brien McMahon High.

This report is based on research conducted by members of the Peace Project, which is one of the programs we manage at Brien McMahon High School.

The mission of the Peace Project is to promote safe schools and communities, with an emphasis on dating violence, day laborers and human trafficking.

The Center for Youth Leadership is the recipient of the:  
Governor's Education Citizenship Award  
Night of the Child Award from Prevent Child Abuse Connecticut  
Patricia C. Phillips Community Service Award  
Mayor's Youth Empowerment Award (Stamford)  
Certificate of Appreciation from the Voluntary Action Center of Mid-Fairfield

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# VOICES

## 1

### MARIA HINOJOSA OF NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO DEFIANCE COLLEGE IN OHIO, MAY 2008

"I would urge you to see these people who have now been categorized as illegal ... to see yourselves in them, because you know right here in Ohio they are your neighbors and friends and co-workers, or they work for you. And yet they live in fear right now because there could be a knock on their door, that any American should be fearful to get, because, without a warrant, some immigration official can come into their home.

And this American family values country then allows for the separation of children from their parents. We should realize it affects all of us. To think that they are just illegals — it cheapens all of us when this happens in our country. Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, told me that he never uses the term illegal immigrant. There is no such thing as an illegal human being. He said that is the way the Holocaust started."

Excerpt from Hinojosa's commencement address. See Sam Dillon, "Commencement Speakers: Messages of Exhortation, Counsel and Congratulation,"  
The New York Times, June 15, 2008

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### STUDENTS AT BRIEN MCMAHON HIGH SCHOOL NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

"I am more than an accent."

Slogan printed on t-shirts for the 365 students who participated in the Peace Project's Immigrants' Rights Day celebration on May 1, 2008.

## HEALTH SURVEY OF DAY LABORERS IN NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

### HIGHLIGHTS

Date of survey	Three days in April, 2008
Place	Lowe Street Bridge in South Norwalk
Members of the survey team	The survey was conducted by members of the Day Laborer Study Team of the Peace Project, which is a program of the Center for Youth Leadership at Brien McMahon High School
Number of day laborers surveyed	107
Select results	
·Reasons for not seeking care	Do not want to miss work...inability to read and complete health forms
·Top health issues	Colds, aches and fever; dental care; depression; and eye care
·Last general check-up	More than 2 years for 68 percent of the men
·Tetanus vaccination	Never for 71 percent of the men
·Sexually transmitted diseases	19 percent of the men said they know laborers who have contracted at least one during their time in the United States
·Diet	63 percent of the men say they eat poorly

### HIGHLIGHTS, HEALTH FAIR

Date of fair	May 28, 2008
Place	Parking lot of DeFlorio's Market, which is at the foot of the Lowe Street Bridge
Number of laborers served	81
Service providers	Norwalk Community Health Center, Norwalk Department of Health, Norwalk Hospital, Stamford Department of Health and Christian Community Action

## BACKGROUND

This report is the second we've researched and written about day laborers in Norwalk, Connecticut. The first report, "You're Like Angels from Heaven," was published in June 2007. It looks at day laborers in our hometown from a demographic point of view.

Our work with day laborers has its roots in the day-long demonstration we led on May 1, 2006 in support of National Day Without Immigrants. A month earlier administrators at Brien McMahon High School, which is the headquarters of the Center for Youth Leadership, got word that large groups of students were going to walk off campus in support of an economic boycott called by several immigrant advocacy groups.

Administrators were less than pleased with the prospect of 300 students leaving school, so the Peace Project brokered a deal with the principal and vice principals. We will get the students to remain in class if school officials allow us to lead activities that provide students with a forum to voice their support for issues that hit close to home.<sup>1</sup>

The administrators agreed, so the Peace Project led a series of activities that prompted the following response from Joseph Rodriguez, who was the principal of Brien McMahon High at the time:

"We wanted to give our students the opportunity to express how they feel about the immigration issue," said Joseph Rodriguez, the recently retired principal of Brien McMahon High. "You can hear the passion in these kids' voices. When you have a group of students this large and they are that attentive, you know that they are intently interested in the subject. It's such a positive thing. They're learning more here right now than they would probably be learning in the regular classroom."<sup>2</sup>

Given the response of students and school administrators, the Peace Project decided to adopt immigrant issues as one of its core components.<sup>3</sup> Two initiatives

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<sup>1</sup> Noelle Frampton, "BMHS Students Join Immigration Debate," Norwalk Hour, May 2, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, Frampton, Norwalk Hour.

<sup>3</sup> Other issues addressed by the Peace Project are teen dating violence and human trafficking.

have been established: the Day Laborer Study Team and the Voices of Immigrant Parents Program.

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The Voices of Immigrant Parents Program, which was established in January 2008, addresses the school-based barriers that prevent immigrant parents from influencing the social and emotional success of immigrant students at Brien McMahon High. Funding from the United Way of Norwalk and Wilton underwrites workshops, lectures and monthly meetings of a parent organizing committee.<sup>4</sup>

The Day Laborer Study Team (which was established in September 2006) and its research of the health care needs of day laborers in Norwalk is the subject of this report.

## CENTER FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The Center for Youth Leadership is the largest youth activism organization in Fairfield County, Connecticut. Its model of socially engaged philanthropy has been adopted by four high schools: Greenwich High School, Stamford High School, Westhill High School, and Brien McMahon High, which is its headquarters.

Socially engaged philanthropy has four elements: grant making, volunteer programs, public awareness activities and social change campaigns. High schools or community groups that adopt the model must identify one social issue to address, and implement the four elements within 36 months. Training and on-going technical assistance is provided by the Center for Youth Leadership

The Voices of Immigrant Parents Program and the Day Laborer Study Team at Brien McMahon High are just two examples of the work done by the 245 students at the schools that have adopted our model of activism. Other issues are child abuse, teen dating violence, and human trafficking.

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<sup>4</sup> See the following news accounts for information: Article by Margaret Steele in *The New York Times* of June 22, 2008; James Lomuscio, "Learning Report Cards' Language," *The Advocate*, January 16, 2008; Lisa Chamoff, "Hispanic Parents to Discuss Youth Issues," *The Advocate*, March 11, 2008; and Lisa Chamoff, "McMahon Workshop Addresses the Needs of Hispanic Parents," *The Advocate*, May 15, 2008.

The programs of the Center for Youth Leadership have been noted by several sources, including Dr. Sal Corda, the Superintendent of Norwalk schools, and The Advocate.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Sal Corda<sup>6</sup>

"I want to tell (the students) how impressed I am by (their) dedication and commitment...to the well being of their community and the world around them. In the opinion of some, everyday life and the issues that we face in living should be the province of a true education and the world should be the classroom. There is no doubt that what the students in the Center for Youth Leadership are learning is every bit as valuable as what we teach them in the classroom."

The Center for Youth Leadership is the recipient of the Governor's Educational Citizenship Award, the Night of the Child Award from Prevent Child Abuse Connecticut, and Mayor's Youth Empowerment Award (Stamford).

The Advocate<sup>7</sup>

"Anybody who has been paying attention knows this isn't the first time Brien McMahon students have struck a blow for social justice. The Senators Community Foundation and Peace Project are programs of the school's Center for Youth Leadership, a remarkably active organization through which students have led not just their peers, but adults in the city and state.

Students at Brien McMahon have organized workshops to help Spanish-speaking parents become better involved in their kids' education. They've created a Campaign for Violence Against Youth and Girls, gotten out and interviewed day laborers for the purpose of creating a program to meet their needs, and sponsored talks for students on social issues and an award program for community service providers. A couple of years ago, they rose up to protest sexist T-shirts sold at Abercrombie & Fitch. The list goes on and on.

These kids aren't gluing glitter to poster board after school. These young people are digging in and getting their hands dirty. They are activists. How we wish there weren't a need for our students to have to worry about problems like this. But how proud the city is of their willingness to meet the often-ugly realities of life head on. Bravo all around."

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for a summary of editorials about the work of the Center for Youth Leadership.

<sup>6</sup> E-mail to Bob Kocienda of the Center for Youth Leadership, September 27, 2007

<sup>7</sup> Editorial, "The Latest Goal for Students: Abuse Awareness," The Advocate, March 21, 2008



## PEACE PROJECT'S DAY LABORER STUDY TEAM

The Day Laborer Study Team is comprised of six bilingual members of the Peace Project. The team meets once a month during the school year to plan activities, which include direct service work and a public awareness campaign.<sup>8</sup>

The direct service work takes place at the Lowe Street Bridge in South Norwalk, which, depending on the day, is where 65-110 men socialize and wait for contractors.

Members of the Day Laborer Study Team visit the bridge twice a month at 7 AM to share information with the laborers and provide them with light refreshments and, when necessary, clothing. Information sharing focuses on services that are available in the community, news about the day laborer communities in neighboring towns, and other issues.

Since September 2006 members of the Day Laborer Study Team have visited the bridge 41 times; provided the men with flu shots in December 2006 and December 2007; published a report on day laborers in Norwalk;<sup>9</sup> and collected data on cases of wage abuse. Members of the team have conducted countless briefings about their work with the general public, and led discussion groups with high school students.

The mission of the Peace Project is to promote safe schools and communities, with an emphasis on teen dating violence, day laborers, and human trafficking. It is one of two programs that the Center for Youth Leadership manages at Brien McMahon High. The other is the Senators Community Foundation, which focuses on child abuse.

*“Once you see not only the problem, but also the solution, there’s no escape. You see it, you can’t look away from it. I want it to feel like an adventure, not a burden, this helping others, this changing things.”*

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<sup>8</sup> Partners include the Norwalk Department of Health, the Norwalk Police Department, and DeFlorio’s Market.

<sup>9</sup> Funding for the report - “You’re Like Angels from Heaven” - was provided by the Fairfield County Community Foundation.

## IMMIGRANTS AND DAY LABORERS - CURRENT CLIMATE: A SUMMARY OF SELECT NEWS ACCOUNTS

**1** *Javier Hernandez, "Until Sudden Death, an Immigrant Worker Toiled Six Days a Week," The New York Times, June 12, 2008* The routine never changed. Six days a week, Lauro Ortega shuffled from pit to pit, taking another construction job. At the end of each week, he sent more than half of his weekly salary of about \$700 to his wife and two children in Ecuador. On Sunday, he went to church and prayed. Mr. Ortega, who came to the United States four years ago as an illegal immigrant, was 30 when he was killed in March by rubble that fell from the wall of a house and partially buried him. On Wednesday, prosecutors charged the man who hired him with manslaughter. Mr. Ortega's life showed the lengths to which some immigrants go to send a slice of prosperity to their families thousands of miles away. They sacrifice leisure for long work weeks, watch their children grow up in snapshots sent across seas, and take on risky jobs that pay relatively well — and in cash. Mr. Ortega left his country four years ago to escape dreary economic conditions. The son of a farmer, Mr. Ortega quickly learned the importance of hard work as a formula for survival. Mr. Ortega wrestled with the decision to leave his family for the United States, accepting it only after he saw it as the only way to bring his family out of near-poverty, his brother said."

**2** *Jason DeParle, "Spain, Like U.S., Grapples With Immigration," The New York Times, June 10, 2008* "With the United States riven by calls to legalize millions of illegal immigrants, Americans might consider the possible effects by looking at southern Europe, where illegal immigration abounds and so have forgiveness plans. In the last two decades, Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece have run at least 15 legalization programs, including a Spanish effort three years ago that was among the Continent's largest. With little domestic opposition, Spain legalized nearly 600,000 of the African, Latin American and eastern European workers who helped power its economy and brought this once insular land the strengths and strains of diversity. Immigrants say their prized work cards have brought higher wages, peace of mind and reunions of separated families. But critics say legalizations have attracted more illegal migrants — with spillover risks to nearby countries — and warn that an economic slowdown now puts Spain and its foreigners at odds."

3 *Damien Cave, "States Take New Tack on Illegal Immigration," The New York Times, June 9, 2008* "Three months after the local police inspected more than a dozen businesses searching for illegal immigrants using stolen Social Security numbers, this community in the Florida Panhandle has become more law-abiding, emptier and whiter. Many of the Hispanic immigrants who came in 2004 to help rebuild after Hurricane Ivan have either fled or gone into hiding. Churches with services in Spanish are half-empty. Businesses are struggling to find workers. And for Hispanic citizens with roots here — the foremen and entrepreneurs who received visits from the police — the losses are especially profound.

Sheriff Wendell Hall of Santa Rosa County, who led the effort, said the arrests were for violations of state identity theft laws. But he also seemed proud to have found a way around rules allowing only the federal government to enforce immigration laws. In his office, the sheriff displayed a framed editorial cartoon that showed Daniel Boone admiring his arrest of at least 27 illegal workers. His approach is increasingly common. Last month, 260 illegal immigrants in Iowa were sentenced to five months in prison for violations of federal identity theft laws. At the same time, in the last year, local police departments from coast to coast have rounded up hundreds of immigrants for nonviolent, often minor, crimes, like fishing without a license in Georgia, with the end result being deportation."

4 *Monica Potts, "Day Laborers Join Clean-up Efforts," The Advocate, June 1, 2008* The day laborers who gather on (Stamford, Connecticut's) East Side wanted to show the community they are part of it. So about 20 of them helped the East Side Partnership pick up trash beneath Interstate 95, along the railroad tracks and on East Main Street. Israel Vincente, 42, a day laborer who goes to the pick-up site near I-95 every day said it was important 'to show the mayor, to show the community, a more correct and better vision of who we are.'

5 *Susan Campbell, "Immigrant Children's Dilemma," Hartford Courant, June 1, 2008* "At age 8, Edilma Yearwood moved with her family from Panama to New York state. She earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Connecticut in 1974 and now teaches at Georgetown University's School of Nursing and Health Studies. Because of her immigrant past, Yearwood specializes in the immigrant experience's effect on mental health, especially children's. She knows that immigration can be traumatic to children, both leaving the familiar and learning the ways of a new culture.

She also knows this assessment runs counter to our national myth: A family seeking opportunity in America is considered the happy beginning of their story. But that family may have left poverty, sickness or civil war to move here, and they may bring a host of untreated disorders with them. Their circumstances in Connecticut — though they may be better economically — can fall short of an immigrant's expectations. Both past and future

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rests heaviest on the thin shoulders of the families' children, who may be traumatized to the point of suffering long-term from the move. Yet along with other children who've grown up in chaotic circumstances and whose diagnoses go wanting, immigrant children are too often left to languish — and catch up on their own. Yearwood and others say mental health professionals should look at these children as potential sufferers of trauma-induced disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder or developmental trauma disorder."

6 *Karen Mahabir, "Virginia County See Signs of Change Amid Illegal Immigration Crackdown," Associated Press, May 27, 2008* "Business at Pedro Vargas' store, Club Video Mexico, has slid so steeply that only eight people walked through the door one day last month. One thing he has been selling, however, are one-way bus tickets from northern Virginia to Texas and Mexico. Soon he'll be getting his own ticket out of town - seeking a friendlier and more lucrative place to do business. Many say Prince William's new crackdown on illegal immigrants has created an environment so unfriendly that Hispanic people are leaving the county of more than 350,000. The county's policy, which has drawn heated debate and national attention, directs police officers to check the immigration status of everyone they arrest. Beginning July 1, illegal immigrants also will be denied certain services, such as business licenses and mortgage and rental assistance. 'That's like a smack in the face to me,' said Vargas, a 24-year-old Mexican immigrant who is living in the U.S. legally. 'I've been living here my whole life, and now they pass this law?' "

7 *Stephen Clark, "Chief Vows to Improve Day Laborer Pick-up Site" The Advocate, May 18, 2008* "In his second meeting with day laborers and their supporters Friday, Stamford, Connecticut Police Chief Brent Larrabee described a "no-hassle zone" as ineffectual because there is no place for contractors to park. The pickup site is along North State Street under Interstate 95 near Lafayette Street. Larrabee told about 20 laborers at that he will work with state and federal authorities to implement changes, such as taking down the "no parking" signs there. Before Larrabee first met with day laborers last month, they complained that police were forcing them into the no-hassle area by blaring their sirens, attacking them with pepper spray, poking them with batons and transporting them out of town."

8 *Joshua Brustein, "With Migrant Workers in Short Supply, a Farmer Looks to Machines," The New York Times, May 27, 2008* "Scores of Jim Bittner's cherry trees are now just heaps of roots and sticks, piled in his fields here along Route 18. Some of the

branches lying on the ground are dotted with small blossoms, the season's earliest evidence that sweet cherries were on their way. But for Mr. Bittner, having sweet cherries would have meant hiring someone to prune the trees and harvest the fruit. 'We always assumed

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we could find the labor we would need,' said Mr. Bittner. 'We're not making that assumption anymore.' Mr. Bittner said he was planning to grow blueberries, or tart cherries for use in pies, because those crops could be harvested by machine and did not require migrant workers. Others managing the fields and dairies of western New York State are starting to make the same calculation. For the last several years, crackdowns on illegal immigrants and the lack of comprehensive immigration reform have increased anxiety among the region's farmers, many of whom rely on a migrant labor force from Latin America to work their fields. Some have begun making changes in their operations to reduce their reliance on that labor force."

9 Max Hadler, "Tackling the Undocumented Immigrant Problem," *The Hour*, May 19, 2008 "One of the more far-reaching plans was an order signed in March by Rhode Island Gov. Donald Carcieri that encourages a crackdown on illegal immigration by state police, inspired by what he sees as undocumented immigrants' drain on the state's economic resources. Carcieri's order, though, was not based on any substantive cost-benefit analyses of the undocumented population in Rhode Island. If our neighbor to the east is anything like Connecticut, that may be because no such analyses are available. There are some estimates of the cost Connecticut incurs to provide services to the undocumented population, especially in education, but there is little concrete offsetting information on how those immigrants contribute to local economies in taxes, gross product and purchasing power. The Federation for American Immigration Reform, or FAIR, a group that advocates tighter border control and immigration enforcement, estimates that 115,000 undocumented immigrants in Connecticut cost the state \$112 million in 2006 for education, emergency medical care and incarceration."

10 Eugene Driscoll, "Danbury Church Joins New Sanctuary Movement," *Danbury News Times*, May 18, 2008 The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, Connecticut voted Friday to join a national, faith-based movement that assists families targeted for deportation by the federal government. The church is the first in the state to join the New Sanctuary Movement. The sanctuary movement views the immigration issue through a moral lens and believes the practice of splitting undocumented families by deportation is unjust. The New Sanctuary Movement Pledge calls for members to "take a public, moral stand for immigrants rights." In an effort to sway public opinion, many sanctuary churches work to publicize the plight of illegal immigrant families whose members are targeted for deportation. Other member churches provide physical sanctuary, allowing

an illegal immigrant to live inside the church, a place agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are hesitant to make arrests.

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**11** Daniel Wakin, “Pope Speaks Up for Immigrants, Touching a Nerve,” *The New York Times*, April 20, 2008 Even as he was flying to the United States, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of protecting immigrant families, not dividing them. He raised the issue again in a meeting on Wednesday with President Bush, and later that day spoke in Spanish to the church's “many immigrant children.” The choreography underscores the importance to the church here of its growing diversity — especially its increasing Hispanic membership. Benedict has calibrated his immigration stance with care, stating the need to protect family unity and immigrants' human rights, but pointedly avoiding any specifics of the American immigration debate, like the issue of whether to grant legal status to illegal immigrants.

**12** Editorial, “The ID Dilemma,” *Hartford Courant*, March 30, 2008 “New Haven, Connecticut makes its 'Elm City Resident Card' available to anyone, whether U.S. citizen or not, who can show proof of residence. The card allows holders to use city parks and libraries and enables illegal immigrants to open bank accounts so they stop serving as easy targets for thieves. This is a noble attempt to right a wrong, but it is creating another problem: It is putting public records beyond the public's reach. The city is fighting freedom of information requests to release names and addresses of ID holders. Mayor John DeStefano and James M. Thomas, the state's homeland security commissioner, say that disclosure would threaten public safety. City hall workers have received some alarming anti-immigrant messages. But absent a credible, specific threat from vigilantes, we believe the ID card list is a public record. It doesn't identify who is a U.S. citizen and who isn't.”

**13** Rick Green, “Some Things Best Kept Private,” *Hartford Courant*, March 18, 2008 “When the government collects routine information about citizens, that data should be made public. Newspapers routinely print who the police arrest, who is hired by city hall and how politicians are spending your tax dollars. But what do you think might happen if someone obtained the names, addresses and pictures of illegal immigrants that have been collected by the city of New Haven, and posted that information on the Internet? I can give you an idea. Last summer, when New Haven launched its controversial Elm City Resident Card, which offers official identification to all city residents — including illegal immigrants — it brought out the lunatic fringe. ‘You need to be taken by the United States citizens and killed,’ someone wrote to Kica Matos, who oversees the program. ‘When they show up for an I.D. card, shoot them dead,’ a concerned citizen suggested. Another wrote to Mayor John DeStefano: ‘I have my automatic rifle ready to go and I won't hesitate to use it to kill

these rodents.' "

**14** *Editorial, "New Visas Help Fight Crime," Hartford Courant, March 11, 2008*  
"Illegal immigrants' fear of deportation makes them easy targets for criminals because of the low risk that they will report crimes to police. Too often, the victims are women and

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children who have been robbed, beaten and sexually assaulted by other immigrants. An eight-year-old federal law that finally took effect in October encourages crime victims who are illegal immigrants to come forward by granting them and their families visas for doing so.

Some 10,000 so-called U-visas will be issued each year under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. They will let the immigrants live and work in the United States for three years. Afterward, they are placed on a list for permanent residency.

Applicants for the visas have to be certified (by police, prosecutors or a judge) as victims of specific crimes such as rape, torture, trafficking, incest, forced prostitution and kidnapping. They must have suffered substantial physical and mental abuse. Chances that someone would succeed in falsifying a crime report to win a visa are low."

**15** *Pew Hispanic Center, "National Survey of Latinos 2007: As Illegal Immigration Issue Heats Up, Latinos Feel a Chill," December 2007* "Hispanics in the United States are feeling a range of negative effects from the increased public attention and stepped up enforcement measures that have accompanied the growing national debate over illegal immigration. Just over half of all Hispanic adults in the U.S. worry that they, a family member or a close friend could be deported, a new nationwide survey of Latinos by the Pew Hispanic Center has found. Nearly two-thirds say the failure of Congress to enact an immigration reform bill has made life more difficult for all Latinos. These effects include more difficulty finding work or housing; less likelihood of using government services or traveling abroad; and more likelihood of being asked to produce documents to prove their immigration status."

**16** *Nina Bernstein, "Challenge in Connecticut Over Immigrant's Arrest," The New York Times, September 26, 2007* "Nine day laborers are expected to file a federal lawsuit today challenging the legality of a sting operation in Danbury, Conn., last year that led to their arrest on immigration charges. Those plaintiffs, and a tenth man whose traffic stop for a noisy muffler resulted in his deportation to Ecuador, contend that their arrests were

illegal and part of a campaign based on racial profiling. They also say that the city of Danbury, its mayor, Mark D. Boughton, and its police chief acted to enforce federal immigration law without authority."

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## HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF IMMIGRANTS: AN OVERVIEW

### LATINO CONTEXT: UNITED STATES <sup>10</sup>

According to the National Council of La Raza, about 11.6 million U.S. households - that's one in every 10 - are Hispanic.<sup>11</sup> That translates into a Hispanic population of 42 million. The U.S. Census estimates that by 2020, the Hispanic population will reach 60 million, or 18 percent of the total U.S. population.

Although the Hispanic community represents the largest racial and ethnic minority in the United States, they are still facing several challenges that affect their quality of life. Probably the most alarming area is in the field of health.

Here are some of the challenges faced by Latinos: <sup>12</sup>

Studies suggest that lack of health insurance, language, and citizenship are key barriers that prevent many Hispanics from accessing health care services and from receiving quality health care.	Hispanics have higher uninsured rates across all age groups when compared to non-Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Blacks. It is reported that nearly 1 out of 3 Hispanics are likely to be uninsured.
Hispanics are more likely to suffer from chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes when compared to non-Hispanic Whites, but they are less likely to receive regular care.	Hispanics represent the highest number of uninsured children in the United States. Nearly 24 percent of Hispanic children are uninsured.

Psychological distress as an element of health, especially where the children of undocumented parents are concerned, was the topic of a 2007 study. Called

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<sup>10</sup> An excellent primer is Leighton Ku, "Why Immigrants Lack Adequate Access to Health Care and Health Insurance," Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, September 1, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> National Council of La Raza, "Hispanic Health Data 2006," Washington, DC. January 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



"Paying the Price," the study brought to light the trauma experienced by children whose parents were rounded up in worksite raids conducted by U.S. immigration officials.<sup>13</sup>

According to the study, there are approximately five million U.S children with at least one undocumented parent.<sup>14</sup> Researchers found that the recent intensification of immigration enforcement activities by the federal government has put these children at risk of family separation, economic hardship and psychological trauma,<sup>15</sup> which the U.S. government and nonprofit agencies will have to deal with for years to come.<sup>16</sup>

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Hispanics in Connecticut have their own set of issues. Here's one startling fact. While Latinos represent nine percent of Connecticut residents, they account for a staggering 40 percent of Connecticut's uninsured population.<sup>17</sup>

Other health issues faces by Latinos in Connecticut include the following:<sup>18</sup>

1	Working Latinos are less likely to work for an employer who offers insurance.	3	In nearly 20 percent of the Latino births, there was late or no prenatal care. This compares to 8 percent among non-Latino white births.
2	Latino children are the most likely to be uninsured (21 percent) compared	4	Latinos in Connecticut have a 60 percent higher mortality rate for diabetes and

<sup>13</sup> Rosa Maria Casteneda, et al, "Paying the Price: The Impact of Immigration Raids on American Children," National Council of La Raza and the Urban Institute, July 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, Castanedo, p. 1

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See pages 42-63 of Castanedo's report for a discussion of the health consequences faced by children.

<sup>17</sup> Hispanic Health Council of Connecticut, "A Profile of Latino Health in Connecticut," Hartford, Connecticut, 2007, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

to non-Latino white children (7 percent) and African American children (14 percent).	40 percent higher mortality rate due to diabetes-related causes than non-Latino whites.
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## HEALTH ISSUES OF LATINOS IN CONNECTICUT, CONTINUED

5	44 percent of Latino adults report that they usually have a hard time speaking to or understanding a doctor because of language issues.	7	Latinas represent 19 percent of the gonorrhea cases (11 times higher than non-Latino white woman) and 30 percent of Chlamydia cases (15 times higher than non-Latino white women).
6	25 percent of Latino parents indicate that the inability to communicate in the same language with their doctors was the single largest barrier to getting health care for their children.	8	Latinos account for 25 percent of the AIDS cases in the state.

## DAY LABORERS IN THE UNITED STATES

According to Vilma Enriquez-Haass of the School of Public Health at the University of California at Los Angeles, Latino day laborers are one of the more understudied groups in the United States.<sup>19</sup> Formal studies are far and few between, with just a few devoted - at least in part - to health issues.

One of the more widely quoted studies was conducted by researchers at the University of Illinois and the University of California at Los Angeles. Other sources of data are the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the Department of Health in Stamford, Connecticut.

<sup>19</sup> Vilma Enriquez-Haass, "Predictors of Access to Health Services for Latino Day Laborers," American Public Health Association, Nov 7, 2007.

"On the Corner: Day Labor in the United States," which was published by the University of Illinois and UCLA, was the first nationwide study of day laborers.<sup>20</sup> It examined several issues, including workplace safety.

Researchers found the following:<sup>21</sup>

1	One in five day laborers has suffered an injury while on the job.	4	Most day laborers know that their work is dangerous, by the pressing need for employment finds them returning to this market for work.
2	Among laborers who have been injured on the job, 54 percent did not receive the medical care they needed, mainly because the worker could not afford the care or the employer refused to cover the worker under the company's worker's comp insurance.	5	Factors that contribute to on-the-job injury: exposure to hazardous conditions, use of faulty equipment, lack of protective gear and safety equipment, and lack of safety training.
3	22 percent of laborers have missed more than a month of work due to a job related injury.	6	Day laborers endure unsafe working conditions because they fear being fired or not paid for their work.

In July 2007 the San Francisco Department of Public Health published an extensive health assessment of day laborers who gather at three sites in the city.<sup>22</sup> The report, which is based on a survey and focus groups, found the following:

1	The most commonly stated health problems were colds, headaches, and foot problems.	3	Access to dental services was consistently listed as one of the top ranked requested services.
2	Services to address muscle pain, falls	4	Factors that contribute to on-the-job

<sup>20</sup> Abel Valenzuela, et al, "On the Corner: Day Labor in the United States," January 2006. The report can be downloaded at [www.sscnet.ucla.edu/issr/csup/index](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/issr/csup/index).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> San Francisco Department of Public Health, "Day Laborers' Access to Medical Services," July 2007.

	and work injuries were major health concerns.		injury: exposure to hazardous conditions, use of faulty equipment, lack of protective gear and safety equipment, and lack of safety training.
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## HEALTH ISSUES OF DAY LABORERS IN SAN FRANCISCO, CONTINUED

5	Several laborers described their depression as caused by an inability to find work, not being paid by employers and an inability to support their families.	7	Most commonly identified barriers to accessing care: cost of services, waiting time, and fear of deportation.
6	Laborers reported several methods of self care: homemade remedies, tequila, buying meds and taking care of wounds.	8	Services that would help the laborers improve their health: free medical care in Spanish, dental care, eye exams, STD treatment/prevention, and TB testing.

According to researchers in San Francisco:

"Almost all day laborers encountered by the Department of Public Health stated that their primary reason for being in the United States is to earn money for themselves or to send back to their families in their country of origin. Because employment is closely tied to location, they tend to be very hesitant to go very far from hiring sites. They said they would be more likely to seek out services if they could quickly access the services, and not have to wait around for one to two hours to be seen, thereby missing potential employment."<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, San Francisco Department of Public Health, p. 6. For information about economic challenges faced by immigrants, please see Rakesh Kochhar, "Latino Labor Report, 2008: Construction Reverses Job Growth for Latinos," Pew Hispanic Center, June 4, 2008.

## HEALTH SURVEY OF DAY LABORERS NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

### BACKGROUND

When we started our work with the day laborers in September 2006, very few people in Norwalk knew much about the men who gather on "El Paladino," or the Little Nest, which is what the laborers call the Lowe Street Bridge.

As Lorena Martinez, a member of the Peace Project's Day Laborer Study Team, said at a news conference we hosted on June 6, 2007:

"On any given day in America 118,000 workers are either looking for day labor jobs or working as day laborers. Many of us see the day laborers when they gather on a busy street corner, or in front of small businesses and home improvement stores. But do we really 'see' them? Do we really know who they are beyond the often inaccurate and unsubstantiated portrayals we hear? Unfortunately, the answer is no."<sup>24</sup>

Anita Willcox, another member of the Day Laborer Study Team, brought it closer to home when she talked about her experiences before joining the study team:

"Sometimes when I drive by the bridge with my dad, I look and see someone new or realize, 'Hey I actually know that person (from my work on the bridge).' Before I joined the study team, it was just driving by the bridge with the men on it. Now it's so much more."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Debbie Chajon, et al, "You're Like Angels from Heaven," Center for Youth Leadership, July 2007.

<sup>25</sup> Ali Fenwick, "Students Brings Lives of Day Laborers Into Focus," The Advocate, June 7, 2007.

The team's first task, therefore, was to educate Norwalk about the men who work on their lawns, gardens and houses.<sup>26</sup> In July 2007, we released a report that was based on a demographic survey we conducted with the men. Through interviews with 92 laborers, we learned, among other things, their countries of origin, how

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much they earn, and what percent of their income is allocated for rent, food and to support family back home.<sup>27</sup> Results of the survey were shared with government officials, the Norwalk business community, non-profit organizations, and the faith community.

Our focus on demographics did not preclude the laborers from talking about health issues. In fact, health issues surfaced about three months into our visits to the bridge. The men talked about job related injuries, everyday aches and pains, the cost of health care, and access to Spanish speaking clinicians. We even talked about curanderas, or traditional healers, and the role they play in relieving stress and other health issues.<sup>28</sup>

"We could have asked health questions on the demographic survey," said Meri Caguao, a member of the Day Laborer Study Team, "but it would have made the survey too long. The men had to go to work. They would have had to stop the survey to jump in the truck of a contractor."

So, we agreed to follow the demographic survey with a literature search of the health needs of day laborers. Our research led to two issues: health needs and access to health care.

## SURVEY DESIGN

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<sup>26</sup> A common misperception is that the laborers work primarily in Greenwich, Darien, New Canaan, and Westport. According to the men, the majority of them work in Norwalk.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, Chajon.

<sup>28</sup> At the foot of the Lowe Street Bridge sits DeFlorio's Market, which scores of laborer patronize. According to Lorena DeFlorio, the owner, "A lot of the laborers ask for herbal tea and herbs. They use it to medicate themselves for colds and aches" (May 23, 2008). For information about curanderas, see Kevin Sack, "Illegal Farm Workers Get Health Care in Shadows," The New York Times, May 10, 2008.

The survey we designed was based on several sources: information we gathered from the men in Norwalk since December 2006; surveys conducted with day laborers in San Francisco and New York; and a literature search of health issues faced by immigrants to the United States.

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We tested the survey with a dozen laborers who assemble on the bridge. We made revisions based on their feedback, most of which centered on the phrasing of the questions.

We conducted the survey over a three day period in April 2008. Six members of our Peace Project walked up and down the bridge with clipboards from 6:30 AM to 8:30 AM on days one and two, and 8 AM to 9:30 AM on day three.



Paulina Hernandez, 16, right, interviews Pablo Tellas, 38, of Mexico, as her sister Jakelina, 15, interviews Hoyos Ever Jiovan of Colombia yesterday on the Lowe Street Bridge in South Norwalk. (Chris Preovolos/Advocate photo)

"Help us help you," said Anita Willcox, Carla Calderon and others as they approached groups of laborers. "Your answers to these questions will help us organize a health fair, complete with doctors, nurses and technicians."

Of the 119 laborers we asked to complete the survey, 114 agreed. According to many of the laborers, the high response rate was based on the trust the men have in the members of Peace Project. "You come to the bridge when you say you will," said Raul, a laborer, "and you keep your promise when you give us food and

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clothing. I remember this year and the year before when you gave us flu shots, and the time you provided us with a bus so we could attend an organizing meeting at your school. Of course we'll help you with the survey."



Jennifer Aritzabal of the Peace Project administers our health survey with a day laborer.

Those who declined to participate cited confidentiality as the reason. Of the 114 who agreed to participate, seven did not complete the survey because they were picked up for work.



# THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY START ON THE NEXT PAGE.

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## SURVEY RESULTS

(n = 107 respondents)

### 1. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Home country	Mexico: 55 percent Honduras: 21 percent Guatemala: 16 percent Balance from Colombia, Argentina, Peru, and El Salvador
Age	Average of 29 years; age range from 15 to 56 years
Length of stay in the United States	Average of 4.2 years
Length of stay in Connecticut	Average of 2.3 years

### 2. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Has anyone ever explained the medical system in the United States to you?	No: 78 percent
Have you ever skipped medical attention because:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Not enough money for transportation: 39 percent</li> <li>· Not enough money for pay for care: 57 percent</li> <li>· You did not want to miss work: 67 percent</li> <li>· You were worried about your legal status: 29 percent</li> <li>· You were worried that the health care provider would not speak your language: 53 percent</li> <li>· You were concerned about your ability to read and complete the medical forms: 61 percent</li> </ul>
Have you ever waited	

until the pain was "very severe" before seeking care?	Yes: 48 percent
Have you ever treated yourself for a health problem?	Yes: 41 percent, with "remedies learned at home," over the counter drugs, and alcohol frequently cited as courses of action.

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### 3. HELP FROM CONTRACTORS

Do contractors provide you with safety equipment on the job?	No: 43 percent
Have you ever been hurt on the job?	Yes: 54 percent
How many days of work did you miss due to the injury?	12 days (average)
Has a contractor helped you pay for job and non-job related injuries or illnesses?	Yes: 7 percent
Has a contractor ever pressured you not to seek medical attention for job and non-job related injuries or illnesses?	Yes: 17 percent

### 4. HEALTH ISSUES

When was the last time you had a general health check-up?	More than 2 years ago: 68 percent
Has a health official ever talked to you about Lyme disease?	No: 72 percent
Have you ever had a tetanus shot?	No: 71 percent
Have there been times during your time in the United States that you have not had enough to eat?	Yes: 64 percent
How would you describe your diet during your time in the United States?	Good: 37 percent Bad: 63 percent

States?	
Do you know day laborers who have struggled with alcoholism during their time in the United States?	Yes: 57 percent

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#### 4. HEALTH ISSUES, CONTINUED

Have you suffered from depression during your time in the United States?	Yes: 56 percent (Causes most often cited: miss family and friends, not finding enough work to support families back home).
Do you know any day laborers who have contracted a STD during their time in the United States?	Yes: 19 percent
During your time in the United States, have you experienced problems with your:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Eyesight: 54 percent</li> <li>· Teeth: 62 percent</li> <li>· Stomach: 38 percent</li> <li>· Feet: 37 percent</li> <li>· Hands: 26 percent</li> <li>· Back: 39 percent</li> <li>· Colds, fever: 74 percent</li> </ul>

### HEALTH FAIR FOR DAY LABORERS IN NORWALK, CONNECTICUT

Parking lot of DeFlorio's Market, May 28, 2008

"For the last few years, high school students in Norwalk, Connecticut have been visiting a spot in the city where day laborers gather each day to wait for work. And in volunteering to help, and getting to know the laborers, the students found that many of them had medical problems that weren't being addressed. Wednesday morning, they did something about it."

Craig LeMoult, "Norwalk Students Bring Health Fair to Day Laborers,"  
National Public Radio, WSHU, Fairfield, Connecticut, May 28, 2008

"I'm excited and nervous," said Carla Calderon, a member of the Peace Project, as she unloaded her car of tables and chairs for the health fair. It was 6:30 AM on May 28 and Carla was barely awake. "Can you please get me a hot chocolate from DeFlorio's?" she asked Marilyn Lopez, also of the Peace Project. "I need something to get me going."

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Carla was excited because weeks of planning was about to pay off in the first health fair for day laborers in Norwalk; laborers that she and other members of the Peace Project have worked with since September 2006.

"The men were excited when we distributed a notice about the health fair last week," said Carla. "The health care providers are all on board. And people from local newspapers said they would cover the fair."

Nevertheless, Carla took a few deep breathes. "I'm nervous because we haven't done anything on this scale before. We've delivered flu shots to the men over the past two years, but organizing that was pretty simple. The health fair is more complicated. We'll see close to 100 men and we have more than a dozen health care professionals here. It's a big deal to organize."

Other members of the Peace Project's Day Laborer Study Team arrived by 6:35 AM. They set up tables and chairs in the parking lot of DeFlorio's Market, which is at the foot of the Lowe Street Bridge, and walked up and down the bridge reminding the laborers about the fair.

The first health care providers to arrive were Dr. Marc Faigen and his staff from the Dental Department at Norwalk Hospital. They were soon followed by Christi Pope from the food bank at Christian Community Action and staff from the Norwalk Community Health Center and the Norwalk Department of Health.

Health Care  
Providers at the Fair

- Norwalk Community Health Center
- Norwalk Hospital
- Norwalk Department of Health
- Stamford Department of Health
- Christian Community Action

"Things really got going when the bus from the Stamford Department of Health arrived," said Meri Caguao, a member of the Day Laborer Study Team. "You couldn't miss it. It's this huge bus that's decked out with an awning and lots of material on display tables and colorful billboards."

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Members of the Day Laborer Study Team staffed the first stop for the laborers - the intake table. They helped the men complete a form that was designed by the Norwalk Community Health Center.<sup>29</sup>

"It's like a triage form," said Larry Cross, the Executive Director of the health center. "It provides us with patient identification information and it allows our triage nurse to guide the men to the correct service."<sup>30</sup>

Services at the fair included blood pressure, HIV/AIDS exams, Lyme disease information, glucose tests, food pantry information, insurance information, dental exams, and an "Ask the Doctor" table for general questions.



Day laborers at the health fair in Norwalk  
(Photo by Craig LeMoult, WSHU Radio)

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<sup>29</sup> At a meeting on May 21, 2008, the Center for Youth Leadership, the Norwalk Health Department and the Norwalk Community Health Center agreed that the health center will provide follow-up care.

<sup>30</sup> Citing decisions by their insurance carriers, several health care providers declined to participate in the health fair.

"We were concerned about a lot of the men," said Meri Caguao of the Peace Project, "because they had not seen a doctor in a long time. Several had problems with their bladder because of the lack of bathrooms during the workday, others asked about the HIV/AIDS test, and others lined up right away for a dental exam."

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Meri continued. "But one man in particular stood out. We thought he was new to the bridge - no one from the Peace Project recognized him. But once you looked past his bloated cheeks and eyes that were nearly shut you knew it was Luis.

Luis has been on the bridge since we first arrived in September 2006. He's always talking about his family back home in Mexico, the work he's doing and his desire to learn English. But on the morning of the fair his happy demeanor was replaced with a bloated face. The contractor who picked him up last week to clear a backyard in Rowayton did not tell him that it was full of poison ivy. The contractor didn't give him a pair of gloves before he started to work, or direct him to a health center for treatment."<sup>31</sup>

One of the biggest draws of the morning was the condom distribution that was done by the staff from the Stamford Department of Health.

"When we were putting the survey together," said Anita Willcox of the Day Laborer Study Team, "we talked about asking the men about sexual activity. Culturally, though, we knew it wouldn't be the best thing to do. But we still wanted to get some idea of activity. So, we decided to phrase the

"Immigrants are often categorized and depicted as discredited, suspect populations who must be regulated, controlled, criminalized or deported, and as such are vulnerable to all sorts of official and unofficial sanctions, insults, and denial of basic human rights."

César E. Chávez Institute at  
San Francisco State  
University

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<sup>31</sup> According to the 107 laborers we surveyed, 43 percent said that contractors do not routinely give them safety equipment on the job; 17 percent said that contractors have tried to dissuade them from seeking medical attention for job and non-job related injuries/illness; and 7 percent said that contractors have helped pay for medical care. For a heart tugging story about an immigrant's death on a job site, see Javier Hernandez, "Until Sudden Death, An Immigrant Worker Toiled Six Days a Week," The New York Times, June 12, 2008.

question in a less than direct way: Do you know of any laborers who have contracted a STD during their time in America?" (19 percent said yes).

One of the least used services at the fair was the emotional care provided by Silvia Rupprecht, a bilingual social worker in the Department of Psychiatry at Norwalk Hospital.

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Although we provided Ms. Rupprecht with a private room in the Stamford Health Department's bus, and despite the results of the survey, many of the men did not use the service.<sup>32</sup>

Ms. Rupprecht, a native of Argentina, was very understanding. "It's unfortunate, but I'm not surprised. It takes a lot for men from Hispanic cultures to talk about their feelings. I talked to a few men about anxiety and depression. Maybe more will come forward at the fair you're going to hold in September."

## CLOSING

"We were very pleased with the survey and the health fair," said Lorena Martinez of the Day Laborer Study Team. "We surveyed 107 laborers and we provided services to 81 men at the fair. Sure, there are things we could have done differently - street signs directing men to the fair, for example, and inviting more providers. That's stuff we'll remember for the health fair we have planned for September 2008. Overall, though, we couldn't be happier."

The biggest positive for the members of the Day Laborer Study Team is the strengthening of the bond they have with the laborers. As Paulina Hernandez, a member of the team, said: "I see myself in their shoes. I'm willing to learn from them and help them any way I can. My family also emigrated here from Mexico. Many of the men have families back at home. Through their eyes I see my family."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Of the 107 men we surveyed, 56 percent said they experienced depression and 57 percent said they know laborers who have struggled with alcoholism.

<sup>33</sup> Nina Sen, "Health Survey to Aid Day Laborers," The Hour, April 16, 2008.

## NEXT STEPS

Our work with the day laborers of Norwalk will continue. This includes the two visits a month we make to the bridge; an expanded health fair in September 2008; flu vaccinations in December 2008; and a discussion with contractors and home owners who hire the day laborers.

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"The contractors and other employers are a big missing piece of our work," said Carla Calderon of the Day Laborer Study Team. "We're sure they're sensitive to what the laborers face - at least we hope they are - but we won't know for sure until we talk to them. The trick is to convince them to give the men work gloves, safety tips for equipment, bathroom breaks, and fair wages that they actually pay, and pay on time - wage abuse is not an insignificant issue."<sup>34</sup>

Another important step is to formally collaborate with the Stamford Partnership, which has taken the lead in providing services to day laborers in the city that is just south of Norwalk.

"It makes sense," said Meri Caguao of the Day Laborer Study Team. "We're working with the same population in different cities, so we can learn from each other. But the important thing is that we take the same approach to working with day laborers - services, listening, public awareness activities, and attention to basic human rights."

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<sup>34</sup> For comments on wage abuse, see Laura Garrison, "Forum Offers Assistance to Day Laborers," *The Hour*, September 22, 2007.



## APPENDIX A EDITORIALS ABOUT THE CENTER FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP

### **1. ACTIVISM** (Excerpt from Editorial, "Latest Goal for Students: Abuse Awareness," *The Advocate*, March 21, 2008)

We wish Brien McMahon High School kids weren't strewing brown bags out in front of City Hall this week. Let's rephrase that. We wish Brien McMahon High School students didn't have to be strewing brown bags out in front of City Hall this week.

We couldn't be more admiring of the fact that they were there. The students, members of the school's Senators Community Foundation, placed 1,342 paper bags in front of the municipal building Tuesday morning. On each was the name of a child who had been abused in Fairfield County last year. More than 240 of them were from Norwalk. And they are not done. On April 1, the group plans to set up a similar display outside the state Capitol in Hartford. This time, however, they'll have 9,422 bags to represent child abuse victims throughout Connecticut last year.

Anybody who has been paying attention knows this isn't the first time Brien McMahon students have struck a blow for social justice. The Senators Community Foundation is a program of the school's Center for Youth Leadership, a remarkably active organization through which students have led not just their peers, but adults in the city and state.

Students at Brien McMahon have organized workshops to help Spanish-speaking parents become better involved in their kids' education. They've created a Campaign for Violence Against Youth and Girls, gotten out and interviewed day laborers for the purpose of creating a program to meet their needs, and sponsored talks for students on social issues and an award program for community service providers. A couple of years ago, they rose up to protest sexist T-shirts sold at Abercrombie & Fitch. The list goes on and on.

These kids aren't gluing glitter to poster board after school. These young people are digging in and getting their hands dirty. They are activists. How proud the city is of their willingness to meet the often-ugly realities of life head on.

## 2. TEEN DATING VIOLENCE (Excerpt from Editorial, "Safe Dates," Cablevision of Connecticut, February 15, 2008)

"It's hard to grasp (violence by and against teens in a dating relationship) since the stereotype is so positive: teenage romance, boyfriends, girlfriends, Sweet 16, all that. But these purple-shirted young people know that sometimes it isn't 'all that.' They belong to the Center for Youth Leadership at Norwalk's Brien McMahon High School, and were among many students from (the Center's programs) in Fairfield County who turned out last week to urge awareness and prevention of teen dating violence. (It's a cycle). And one that this youth-driven awareness campaign aims to break. Theirs is a powerful message for teenagers precisely because it comes from their peers."

## 3. TEEN DATING VIOLENCE (Editorial, "Support Effort Against Teen Dating Violence," The Advocate, October 18, 2007)

"Teen dating violence is a problem that neither is new nor a passing phenomenon. For those reasons, it is important to encourage and provide support for continuing efforts by local students to improve awareness among their peers and show them how they can help put a stop to abusive relationships. Dealing with the problem at the teen level (is) critical. For that reason, peer groups such as YNet (at Greenwich High), the Peace Project in Norwalk and (groups sponsored by the Center for Youth Leadership) at Stamford and Westhill high schools...seem key in helping those in their age groups understand that abusive conduct is unacceptable and dangerous - and much too common a problem. "

## 4. STEREOTYPING TEENS (Editorial, "Stereotyping Teens Does Them Injustice," The Hour, October 4, 2007)

"It's too easy to stereotype today's teenagers, the ones you see at the mall, waling around, talking incessantly on their cell phones or text messaging. You wonder what world they are in. Perhaps closer to the real typical teenagers are those 180 members of the Senators Community Foundation and their friends at Brien McMahon High School who dramatically demonstrated Saturday to bring attention to the scourge of child abuse. At 4 PM they fell to the ground and lay silent, eyes closed. It was the group's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Drop Dead Day in support of child abuse prevention. These students give great promise for this country's future."

## 5. TEEN DATING VIOLENCE (Editorial, "Targeting Date Violence," Cablevision of Connecticut, February 14, 2007)

"Here's a large space filled with purple balloons. What's the occasion - a party, a prom, a children's game? Hardly. There's nothing happy about what these balloons represent. They symbolize teenagers who say they've experienced violence during dates. The Peace Project at Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk has made it its business to keep this issue front and center (with activities like the Balloon Garden). It was really these teens who took the lead locally on this issue. The community will benefit from their efforts."

## 6. YOUTH LEADERS (Editorial, "Lighting the Way Toward Self-Esteem," The Advocate, April 8, 2006)

"Another winner at the annual luncheon and fundraiser for the Fairfield County Community Foundation's Fund for Women and Girls was the YWCA of Greenwich, which will use its grant to expand a dating violence prevention initiative at Greenwich High School by adopting...the social activism model designed by the Center for Youth Leadership at Brien McMahon High School.

It is terribly exciting and reassuring to think about all of the good that could come from the Greenwich High School experience. It could turn these 25 young women on to some of the needs within our communities and touch off a life of activism. It could cause them to find skills they didn't know they had and develop them, improving their own self-esteem.

## APPENDIX B MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE SURVEY AND HEALTH FAIR

CRAIG LEMOULT, "NORWALK STUDENTS BRING HEALTH  
FAIR TO DAY LABORERS," NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO, WSHU,  
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT,  
MAY 28, 2008

This five-minute story was heard on "All Things Considered" on May 28 and May 29.

MAX HADLER, "STUDENTS, DOCTORS AID DAY LABORERS,"  
THE HOUR,  
MAY 29, 2008

A parking lot may not be the most glamorous place to see a doctor, but for Freddy Alvarado, who until Wednesday hadn't received medical treatment in more than three years, the location was irrelevant to the opportunity.

Alvarado was one of 81 day laborers, most of whom are undocumented immigrants from Latin America, who gathered in the lot next to DeFlorio's Market on Ely Ave. in South Norwalk to participate in a health fair run by students from Brien McMahon High School's Peace Project.

With help of providers from Norwalk Hospital, the Stamford Health and Social Services Department, and the Norwalk Community Health Center, or NCHC, Alvarado had his blood pressure and glucose level taken, and submitted to an HIV test. He also received information about Lyme disease -- a prevailing concern for men who perform much of their work outdoors -- and NCHC's sliding fee scale, which charges for treatment based on the patient's ability to pay.

Alvarado, a 42-year-old from Honduras, said his main medical concern was severe urinary and abdominal pain that he attributed to long periods of a treacherous migration through Mexico during which he didn't have access to a bathroom, water or food. The pain has persisted for almost three years, he said, exacerbated by occasional work with contractors who do not allow him to take bathroom breaks.

Asked why he hadn't sought medical help sooner, Alvarado said, "Because they ask for your passport, and the Mexican police took mine."

Through their ongoing work with day laborers, the Peace Project students have sought to address the misinformation that plagues the undocumented community here, including a belief that seeking medical treatment leaves undocumented immigrants exposed to authorities or is impossibly expensive.

In April, the students conducted a survey of 107 of the day laborers who wait for work by the Lowe Street bridge every morning. They found that 78 percent had never received an explanation of how the U.S. medical system works. Fifty-three percent said they had not seen a health care provider because they assumed the person would not speak their language, and 57 percent said they had not sought care because they didn't think they could afford it.

"They don't know they can get help without money," said Tatiana Santiago, a 16-year-old sophomore who helped participants fill out health screening forms.

A handful of the men present Wednesday were aware that hospital emergency rooms are required by federal law to treat all patients, and a number of them had seen a doctor in an emergency setting. But most had never heard of pay-as-you-can systems and a majority didn't know that NCHC existed, said the clinic's eligibility officer, Mindy García, as she passed business cards over a collapsible table and asked the men to contact her.

The providers' focus on follow-up -- presenting the fair as an opportunity to link marginalized constituents with community resources on a regular basis rather than as a one-time screening -- was a fundamental concern, said Peace Project faculty director Bob Kocienda.

One of the most popular tables was staffed by two providers doing finger sticks for glucose readings. Even if the blood sugars weren't skewed by the free coffee and donuts patients were ingesting as they had their fingers pricked, NCHC nurse practitioner Barbara Mueller-Márquez said a real diabetes diagnosis would require additional blood tests and consistent follow-up, care that NCHC is capable of providing.

Mueller-Márquez and García both noticed that many men were complaining of eye problems. Alvarado, for example, said his vision has bothered him since he worked on a demolition project last year without protective goggles or a mask. He thinks his lungs may have also been affected.

Another Honduran man, who gave his name only as Mario, said his eyes were itchy and blurry in a way consistent with seasonal allergies, though he was more concerned about chronic back pain that sometimes is so bad it prevents him from getting to the bridge to look for work.

Anticipating the next question, he said matter-of-factly, "We can't get medical care because we are undocumented."

García said she encouraged the men to see a primary care physician at NCHC for chronic pain management and referrals to specialists, many of whom accept the sliding scale payment plan. The fair also linked the men to the Norwalk Hospital dental and mental health clinics -- two areas of care that are often out-of-reach even for patients who have limited coverage and certainly for undocumented men who are not eligible for state-sponsored insurance.

Within 20 minutes of setting up shop, Dr. Mark Feigen, the director of dental services at Norwalk Hospital, said he had seen a number of mouths that required work. Given the hospital's walk-in system, phone interpreting service and ability to reduce costs, he hoped some of the men would call the phone numbers he provided.

"We're doing our best to eliminate access issues," he said.

In mental health, though, the barriers to access sometimes come from within the patients themselves.

"In the Latino community there's a lot of pride and an idea that one shouldn't look for help outside the family," said Silvia Rupprecht, a social worker in psychiatry at Norwalk Hospital. Still, a number of men approached her to inquire about programs and services for addiction, anxiety and depression.

Members of the Peace Project considered the turnout a success and students are already lining up helping hands for their next fair, to be held in September.

## **LISA CHAMOFF, "IN NORWALK, STUDENTS AIM TO IMPROVE WORKERS' HEALTH," THE ADVOCATE, APRIL 16, 2008**

Oscar García stood quietly on the Lowe Street bridge in South Norwalk early yesterday among dozens of men eyeing passing trucks, hoping for a job for the day.

Waiting in the brisk air, the 38-year-old Honduran native told Brien McMahon High School junior Anita Willcox in Spanish that he has never had his teeth checked by a dentist. He also said that he and his fellow day laborers often are depressed because they are far from home and struggling to find work, but they never talk about it.

Garcia's secret to staying healthy? Playing football.

Several students, members of Brien McMahon's Peace Project, visited the site with clipboards and coffee as they usually do a couple of times a month.

As part of what they call the El Paladino Project - named after the workers' nickname for the bridge, which means "little nest" - the students surveyed the day laborers about their health needs. They will use the results to stage a small health fair for the men next month.

The students hope to organize a larger health fair in September, which is Hispanic Heritage Month. Health is one of the day laborers' biggest concerns, along with finding work and not being paid by some contractors, according to a general survey students conducted a year ago.

The students fanned out among the men on the bridge, asking them if they ever avoided seeking medical attention because they were worried about being deported, or because they did not have enough money. The survey included questions about safety on the job, diet and health problems.

Despite some personal questions - the men were asked if they had ever been diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases - the laborers seemed appreciative. Pablo Tellas, a 38-year-old from Mexico, said he thought the survey is necessary, even though things are going well for him.

Student adviser Bob Kocienda said that because the students visit the bridge regularly, a core group of day laborers trust them.

Since starting the El Paladino Project, the students have provided day laborers with free flu shots and helped start a wage clinic after learning that contractors and other business owners sometimes refuse to pay them.

The students plan to hold the health fair in the small parking lot next to DeFlorio's Market on nearby Ely Avenue. The survey will help them decide what to offer at the fair, in addition to blood pressure screenings.

"If there's a lot of people with asthma and allergies, we'll focus on those," senior Carla Calderon said.

Many of the older men Calderon talked with seemed to have more problems with their backs, eyes and teeth, while younger laborers reported they were healthier.

"When I interviewed the 20-year-old, he didn't have any problems," Calderon said. "The only thing he did have was depression."

Willcox said depression is one of the problems that seems most apparent. One man told her that, in the 12 years he has lived in the United States he has not seen his wife and son.

The group may consider providing counseling at the health fair, Willcox said. "They get here, and it's not as easy as they thought it would be," she said. "The lifestyle is just extremely hard. They really need someone to talk to."

## NINA SEN, "HEALTH SURVEY TO AID DAY LABORERS," THE HOUR, APRIL 16, 2008

A welcoming cup of coffee greeted the day laborers waiting by the Lowe Street Bridge for work who answered questions for a health survey that will help them get access to proper medical care. Students from the Peace Project at Brien McMahon High School woke up with the sun during their spring break to administer a health survey of day laborers who wait at the Lowe Street Bridge for work.

"We did a demographic survey earlier and asked them to rank their top three issues," said Bob Kocienda, director of the Peace Project. "Their issues were finding consistent work, wage abuse and healthcare so this is a follow-up to that survey."

The survey was created by the student group based on research studies and their own conversations with the 100 or more laborers who wait at the bridge everyday. The students have been visiting these laborers for two years about twice a month to bring them breakfast, clothes and other things they may need.

The health survey asked questions about work safety, nutrition, mental health, common ailments such as back pain and why the laborers don't seek medical attention.

"Too much money and hard to find a doctor," said Marco Roblez, one of the laborers. Roblez said he suffered from back pain and was told by a doctor he needed an operation but was unable to pay for the procedure.

None of the day laborers have insurance because they're illegal immigrants and the contractors who pick them up for work don't offer medical benefits. The lack of insurance and the difficulty of finding a doctor they can trust discourages them from getting regular check-ups for vision, dental or sexually transmitted diseases.

"We ask them when they had their last check-up," said Paulina Hernandez, a junior at McMahon. "Most of the questions ask for 'yes' or 'no' answers so they are not uncomfortable."

In creating the survey, students were most concerned about the physical health of the laborers but research told them to ask questions about mental health.

"Of the approximately 32 surveys we took 27 of the men said they were depressed and mostly because they missed their families," Kocienda said. "Mental health is a big issue."

Specific questions about mental or sexual health will be asked by doctors or nurses at a health fair the group plans to hold later in the year. The surveys will be used to determine what needs the medical staff at the fair can look for in the men. A pilot fair will be held in late May to determine logistics and a larger fair will be held in September during Hispanic heritage month.

The health fair may be one of the rare chances a day laborer gets to see a doctor, Kocienda said. Since the men work 12 hour shifts every day and often travel to other towns, it's hard to visit a doctor without missing pay.

One laborer, Rogrigo Roblez DeLaRosa, said he'd been to the doctor once having to borrow money and miss work to pay for the visit. Many laborers are also unable to read or write making it difficult to fill out paperwork in the doctor's office.

This isn't the first time students have given medical attention to the laborers. Each winter for the last two years they've provided flu shots to the workers aided by nurses. They're also holding wage clinics to inform the men about their rights to a fair income and provide legal action.

At the first wage clinic many of the men hadn't been paid upwards of \$2,000, said Jenny Aristazabal, a McMahon senior. Through legal action, the men were able to get their wages. Another wage clinic is planned at DeFlorio Jimmy's store located on Ely Avenue next to the bridge.

"It's hard to watch them getting treated badly," Aristazabal said. "I just didn't think it was fair. If we don't help who will? After all, they're human just like us."

In the next steps, students would like 125 surveys and are planning to take more on Thursday morning.

They're also looking to establish a relationship with contractors and are concentrating on the logistics of the health fair. Students said they'll go back often as needed to act as advocates and allies for issues that affect the laborers.

"I see myself in their shoes," Hernandez said. "I'm willing to learn from them and help them any way I can. My family also emigrated here from Mexico and many of them have families back at home. Through their eyes I see my family."

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