

Partnering to make a difference

LUCHA MINISTRIES AN EXAMPLE OF COLLABORATION THAT WORKS +

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IN SOME WAYS, LUCHA Ministries is an example of a little agency that could. With not much more than a deep desire to respond to a felt community need, the nonprofit organization based in Fredericksburg, VA, launched itself in 2004, but it did not try to go it alone.

"We are very intentional about choosing partners, accepting funding and involving others in significant ways in leadership roles," said Sue Smith, executive director of LUCHA Ministries and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) Mission Field Personnel. LUCHA stands for "Latinos United through Christ in Solidarity and Support." The ministry serves among approximately 18,000 Latino residents in the Fredericksburg community.

The Baylor School of Social Work became one such partner in 2009, sending

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then-MSW student Jennifer Scarborough there in the School's first placement with LUCHA. This spring, MSW student Mary Zane Morton interned with the agency and praised the experience for the variety of learning opportunities it brought her.

"I worked with social service agencies, the health department, pastors of churches, the food bank staff, LUCHA board members and clients, that is, families and individuals," she said. She also helped plan and start a community garden, an idea that originated with Scarborough, and researched the difference in cultural values among different generations of Latino families.

Morton is also the recipient of the

Hogg Foundation Mental Health scholarship, awarded to graduate social work students in Texas who work with Latino populations.

"I love that the Hogg Scholarship is highlighting the need for Spanish-speaking social workers because that need has been so obvious in everything that I've done this semester," she said.

The CBF is another partner, and recently awarded a \$10,000 grant to LUCHA to assist with program funding in areas where Baylor students and students involved in CBF's Student.Go missions program serve.

"We're pleased to share in this partnership," said Bo Prosser, CBF's coordinator for congregational formation. "Greg and Sue Smith and the Baylor School of Social Work are wonderful resource partners for congregations."

Sue Smith is glad she can mentor the students at LUCHA. "We are really excited about having the opportunity to work with and mentor students who are interested in the areas of missions, social work, social justice, and cross-cultural ministry," Smith said. "I believe that the students are getting good, hands-on, practical experience in working with the immigrant population."

Diana Garland, dean of the School of Social Work, agrees. "I'm very excited about this multifaceted partnership and the terrific opportunity LUCHA provides for our students. It's the very kind of collaboration we want to expand."



Jennifer Scarborough (left), MSW 2009/MDiv 2010, was Baylor's first intern to LUCHA, here with a client family, mother Silvia and baby Osvaldo.

LUCHA works in the areas of advocacy and support of Latinos as they struggle to overcome barriers and create a better life in the United States, Smith said. The ministry now has 20 different partners that include governmental agencies, churches, hospitals, seminaries and mission boards.

"We began LUCHA in 2004 asking Latinos one question: What is your struggle?" Smith said. "Then we began to build networks to bridge the gaps in what Latinos need and how they can access it."

Garland's scholarly research shows that collaboration works.

"We know from the research we've done on volunteerism through local churches that the community church has a significant role to play as a partner with existing agencies," she said. "It is one of the ways the church can be most effective in its own mission of living out the Gospel message." ❖