

Engaging Latino Youth through Hands-On Discovery Experiences

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As part of our summer day camp program at Thanksgiving Point, we offered fee waivers to Latino youth to attend the camps. We started by targeting our Latino employees. We translated our day camp poster/flyer into Spanish and sent the information around the property. To accommodate the increase of enrolled students, we planned two additional camps. Unfortunately, we did not have any Latino employees take advantage of this opportunity. Because of this, we used some grant money to find out why this happened. Latino employees were invited to a free luncheon to discuss the barriers, interests and results.

Our menu reflected food catered toward the Latino employees. At this luncheon, many things were brought to our attention by having this discussion. We also created an evaluation survey that was distributed to the Latino employees that were not able to come to the luncheon. We offered incentives to these employees for each survey returned. Between these two efforts, our basic results were as follows:

Everybody saw the fliers announcing the classes. the reason their children did not participate in the summer day camps were because of the following:

- Lack of detailed information about the classes
- Children were too old for classes (12 to 16 years olds)
- Parents always working (have more than one job or both parents working during the day)
- Did not have transportation
- Distance is a problem – many live in Provo
- Found out at the last minute – did not understand they could still sign up for a class.

I was very excited to develop and implement this program here at Thanksgiving Point. We have so many great employees whose children could benefit from our youth programs and it was a nice way to give back to them for their hard work. When we did not get the desired results, it was very disappointing. The discussion and survey results were an eye-opener for me and my staff. We learned a lot about our miscommunications, and the Latino employees, their culture, families, and why we got the results that we did.

For this program concept to be successful in the future, we need someone the Latino employees know and trust to be involved. We worked with a few Spanish speaking employees in translations and such, but needed more communication to accomplish our goals. Other ideas to make the program successful are:

- Pay for the time (30 to 45 minutes) it takes to bring the children to class
- Have classes for older children (in our discussion group they had, 10-12 children from 14-18 years old with most children starting to work at age 16)
- More detailed information needed (class times and agenda, teachers, etc.)
- Have the classes end at the same time the parents finish work
- Have respect for each other, cultures, and needs.