

Centro Cultural Hosts White House Officials August 2016 Afterzone

On July 14th, one Oregon program was lucky enough to host a White House Official as part of this year's efforts to raise awareness for National Summer Learning Day. Established in 1972, Centro Cultural de Washington County is the oldest culturally specific Hispanic organization in Oregon serving large numbers of Latino residents. Centro fills an important role in their community as an all-purpose hub where people can access services, attend classes and be connected with resources of all kinds.

Since its inception, Centro has served Latino families in Washington County with an ever-growing range of programs aimed at creating self-sufficient and active citizens. Centro's mission is to ensure that Hispanic immigrants are fully prepared to integrate into the larger community. They promote education and economic development, increasing cultural consciousness, responding to community needs and celebrating understanding among the diverse groups of our community.



Most recently, Centro Cultural has had an additional focus on engaging middle school youth, supporting local high school leaders in the community, utilizing the afterschool model to support science, math and literacy development, and providing summer learning programming for youth. In early July, Centro found out that they would be hosting the Executive Director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, [Alejandra Ceja](#). This visit was one part of the White House's efforts to recognize the importance of providing engaging summer learning opportunities, particularly for underserved youth who may otherwise be suffering the effects of [summer slide](#). [Click Here](#) to find out more about public and private commitments made this year to support summer learning.

During the visit, White House officials took time to meet with local high school students involved in creating their own Equity Summit. Centro staff and students shared about recent racially-centered events at the high school that led to the Equity Summit and how it all had been fueled by the long-standing prejudices still palpable within the community. Centro took this opportunity to focus their own efforts on **helping youth become empowered advocates**, able to use their own voices and resources to help make a change within the community.

Besides meeting with youth, officials toured the center and spoke with Centro Cultural staff about some of the other opportunities they offer at the center and within the community.

Centro's Executive Director, Maria Caballero-Rubio, spoke about a new emphasis they've identified to serve middle school age youth and how they are utilizing summer to engage youth in a new arts-based program.

Centro will be partnering with OregonASK and National Youth Leadership Council to pilot a service learning based curriculum for middle school youth that includes components of STEM, service learning and career exploration within the context of the youth's community.



Before departing, Alejandra was excited to share about the opportunity that Centro Cultural has to become a **White House Bright Spot in Hispanic Education**, an initiative that highlights programs across the country who are supporting Latino educational attainment and excellence. We were thrilled to share about this unique opportunity highlighting a local program and look forward to sharing more good news about the amazing work Centro Cultural continues to do in Washington County.