

PHILADELPHIA METRO HISPANIC ENTREPRENEURS

EXITO

INAUGURAL EDITION



EXCELENCIA
IN HISPANIC
BUSINESS AWARDS

THE POWER OF REFERRALS FOR
SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

DINE LATINO 2023:
HELPING RESTAURANTS
GENERATE REVENUE



Ayudar a nuestras empresas locales es importante.

En M&T Bank, comprendemos que las pequeñas empresas son el alma de una comunidad que progresa. Por esta razón, nos comprometemos a brindar nuestro apoyo y mantener nuestras decisiones de préstamos a nivel local. [Descubra lo que podemos hacer por su empresa en la sucursal más cercana a su vecindario o visite \[mtb.com\]\(https://www.mtb.com\)](#)

M&T Bank



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LETTER FROM PRESIDENT & CEO



Dear readers,

We are delighted to introduce the inaugural issue of *Exito*, an annual publication that encapsulates the remarkable achievements of the Hispanic business community in the Philadelphia region. This unique journal serves as a historical record, a source of inspiration, knowledge, and support for entrepreneurs, and a fundraising tool to further the GPHCC's mission and initiatives.

Exito is a testament to the incredible journey of our Hispanic business community, ranging from small family-owned enterprises to large corporations making waves in their industries. This publication is not just a magazine but a celebration of the diversity and resilience of Hispanic entrepreneurs.

At the heart of *Exito* are stories of ambition, perseverance, and success. These stories serve as a source of inspiration, showing that with determination and hard work, anything is possible. We are proud to showcase the diversity of Hispanic businesses and recognize outstanding individuals and companies that have made significant contributions to our community.

Celebrating success is only one aspect of *Exito*; this publication also aims to be a tool for entrepreneurs. Inside its pages, you will find insights, resources, and details about the chamber's programs, which offer guidance on starting, growing, and sustaining a successful business. We hope the knowledge shared here will empower you to overcome challenges and seize opportunities.

Exito is not only a celebration of our present but also a record of our history. It's a glimpse into the journey of the Hispanic entrepreneurs, showcasing how far we've come and the challenges we've conquered. As we continue to grow and evolve, we must never forget our roots and the hard work that has brought us to this point.

This publication also serves as a fundraising tool, allowing businesses to advertise and show their support for our mission and initiatives. Your support helps us continue to serve the Hispanic business community, advocating for your interests and fostering an environment where entrepreneurship can flourish.

We envision *Exito* becoming a platform that celebrates our achievements and drives positive change and growth within the Hispanic business community. We welcome your contributions as we work together to make *Exito* an even more influential publication in the years to come.

We extend our gratitude to our readers, contributors, advertisers, and the entire Hispanic business community for your support. Together, we can achieve an even greater *Exito* in the future. We look forward to championing Hispanic businesses and sharing these stories with you in the years ahead.

Thank you for being a part of our journey, and we hope you find this inaugural issue of *Exito* as inspiring as we do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Rodriguez', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Jennifer I. Rodriguez, MCP
President & CEO, Greater Philadelphia
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Editor

ABOUT THE GREATER PHILADELPHIA HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



GREATER PHILADELPHIA
**HISPANIC CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE**

Entrepreneurship is not a DIY project; it is a community-wide effort. Whether you are a business owner, contract with a business, or buy from a business, there is a role for each of us to play as we build a strong, local business sector.

Overview

Established in 1990, the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (GPHCC) is a not-for-profit organization devoted to promoting the advancement and economic growth of Hispanic businesses and professionals in the greater Philadelphia region. We accomplish this

through educational programs and a broad range of services and special events. The GPHCC proactively serves a diverse membership—consisting of entrepreneurs, Latino businesses, Latino professionals, corporations, and government—with the overriding goal of helping these critical constituencies capitalize on the many opportunities their diversity, enhanced by our Latino multicultural mix, offers.

Our Mission

GPHCC develops, promotes, and advocates for Hispanic businesses in the Greater Philadelphia Region while encouraging the advancement and economic growth of the Hispanic community.

LETTER FROM OUR CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Dear readers,

I hope this letter finds you well and thriving in your personal and professional endeavors.

As a contributing editor, it is both an honor and a privilege to share insights and perspectives that contribute to the growth and enrichment of our community.

As you may be aware, the historical pattern of immigrant success in the United States reveals that it takes two to four generations to move from poverty to economic security, from high school dropout to college graduate. We must ask ourselves why and acknowledge that we deserve better.

Small business development education programs done right are part of the solution to bridge this divide.

In the intricate tapestry of our local economies, Latino-owned small businesses are the vibrant threads that weave together the fabric of prosperity. These enterprises, often run by passionate individuals with a vision, are the backbone of our communities. However, the road to success for these businesses can be challenging, laden with hurdles ranging from financial management to marketing strategies. This is where GPHCC's small business development education programs come into play.

Imagine these programs as the guiding light, providing entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools essential for navigating the complex terrain of business ownership. By offering targeted education on topics such as financial literacy, marketing strategies, and sustainable business practices, these programs empower small business owners to make informed decisions that can catapult their ventures to new heights.

The impact of such programs extends far beyond the individual business owner. As these enterprises flourish, they become catalysts

for local economic growth. Job opportunities multiply, injecting vitality into the community and fostering a sense of pride and ownership among its residents. Small businesses, when nurtured through education, have the potential to create a ripple effect, positively influencing the economic landscape and fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Most importantly, small business development education programs may lead to wealth creation if done right.

We endeavor to build strong economic growth foundations for the future through our educational programs. By investing in the knowledge and skills of current and aspiring Hispanic entrepreneurs, we are sowing the seeds for a resilient and dynamic business ecosystem that can weather economic storms and adapt to evolving market trends.

As we recognize the critical role that small businesses play in our community's economic landscape, let us champion the cause of the programs that empower these entrepreneurs. By doing so, we not only invest in the success of individual businesses but also contribute to the flourishing growth of our community as a whole.

We are eager to hear your success story and your thoughts on how our programs could continue to support small business ownership and community wealth building.

Con cariño y aprecio,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lenin Agudo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Lenin Agudo
Director, Widener University
Small Business Development Center
Contributing Editor

GPHCC PROGRAMS TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Our small business development programs help businesses start, grow and scale.

Our programs provide business owners with the strategy, management know-how, and networks needed to think like a CEO, grow revenue, increase jobs, and become contract-ready to do business with Philadelphia's companies, government, and institutions.

Build Latino

Our Spanish language program helps contractors develop business fundamentals and practices to successfully compete for contracts.

Accelerate Business

Accelerate Business gives business owners the knowledge, management know-how, and networks needed to think like a CEO, grow revenue, increase jobs, and be contract-capable and procurement-ready to do business with large companies.

Camino al Exito

Spanish language education series for early-stage and aspiring entrepreneurs who are asking themselves, "Now what?"



Francisco Garcia, Accelerate Business graduate and founder of Strivers' Row Distillery

Photography by Peter Fitzpatrick



Tierra Colombiana has proudly served the Philadelphia community for more than 30 years. The restaurant sits in the heart of the Hispanic community in North Philadelphia and has endured many challenges while remaining a central place for food enthusiasts to enjoy Latin American and Caribbean flavors. Owner Mercy Mosquera tells *Exito* how the business has adapted over time to remain a major part of the Hispanic experience in Greater Philadelphia.

What are the keys to your success?

One of our keys has been perseverance, or as some now call it, resilience. Despite the difficulties, we rise, and from each problem, we make changes and learn from those moments.

What are some current Initiatives or projects to grow your business?

Technology: Improvements in technology bring so many tools to help us keep up with society and our customer’s needs. Successful and modern software for takeout, delivery, accounting, and point of sale helps our employees to do their jobs easily and efficiently.

Menu: We’re also working on improving our menu options with healthy items, decoration, and more training for our kitchen staff so they better understand what a customer expects when they come to Tierra Colombiana. This includes emphasizing tradition, freshness, quality, service, and a feeling of home.

Employee Development: We want to create more possibilities for employment by expanding our ser-

vices with catering options and offering services for private events like business meetings, baptisms, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Once an employee is hired, we strive to make them feel supported and excited to start a career in the hospitality industry.

Community: At Tierra Colombiana, we always maintain a clean and presentable storefront along with the surrounding areas. We want to inspire others in our neighborhood to be an active part of our local public and private institutions. If we use our resources to create the right environment for our customers, employees, and neighbors to collaborate, we can improve and develop our community.

Please describe your journey as a Latino business leader and highlight the key milestones in the trajectory of your business.

We understand our clients and develop a close relationship with them. We have offered additional services that we have developed over time. In other words, we have evolved according to the challenges of each moment—an example of this is the pandemic. We transformed as a business to respond to that specific challenge and reacted fast.

As we grew, we offered additional spaces that our organizations have taken advantage of to hold their events, which has turned the restaurant into a union center for all those who want to connect with our community.

Although it is a challenge at the moment, a few years after growing up, we opened the second floor

Photography by Messina Martinez Photography

to be a place that offers another type of entertainment. Our menu was modified to offer the variety we need and know what our diners, Latinos and non-Latinos, like. Our direct relationship (Jorge and

l) with the community has been an element of success for our business. We have achieved essential stability in our employees so they know our clients and vice versa, creating a family atmosphere.

EL PODER DE LA PERMANENCIA – TIERRA COLOMBIANA

Tierra Colombiana tiene el orgullo de pertenecer a la comunidad de Filadelfia desde hace más de 30 años. El restaurante se encuentra en el corazón de la comunidad hispana del norte de Filadelfia y ha superado numerosos desafíos sin dejar de ser un centro gastronómico para disfrutar de los sabores latinoamericanos y caribeños. Su dueña, Mercy Mosquera, cuenta a Éxito cómo se ha adaptado el negocio a lo largo de los años para seguir siendo una parte importante de la experiencia hispana en la gran Filadelfia.

¿Cuáles son las claves de su éxito?

Una de nuestras claves ha sido la perseverancia o, como algunos la llaman ahora, la resiliencia. A pesar de las dificultades, nos levantamos, y a partir de cada problema, cambiamos y aprendemos de esos momentos. En una palabra: adaptabilidad.

¿Qué iniciativas o proyectos tienen ahora para hacer crecer el negocio?

Una **MEJORA TECNOLÓGICA**, que viene con muchas herramientas que nos ayudan a seguir el ritmo de vida de nuestra sociedad y atender las necesidades de los clientes. Usamos un software muy moderno y útil para gestionar los pedidos, las entregas, la contabilidad, los puntos de venta, etc., lo que a su vez facilita y hace más eficiente el trabajo de nuestros empleados.

Un **MENÚ** que mejora las opciones que ofrecemos, con platos saludables, decoración y capacitación frecuente a nuestro personal de cocina para que comprenda lo que un cliente espera cuando viene a Tierra Colombiana (tradicción, frescura, calidad, servicio, sentirse como en casa).

FORMACIÓN DEL PERSONAL. Queremos generar más posibilidades de empleo, ampliando nuestros servicios con opciones de catering puertas adentro y puertas afuera, ofreciendo servicios para eventos privados, como reuniones empresariales, bautizos, bodas, cumpleaños, aniversarios, etc. Cuando con-

tratamos a una persona, nos esforzamos para que se sienta apoyada y entusiasmada por empezar una carrera en el sector de la gastronomía.

COMUNIDAD. Tierra Colombiana siempre ha tratado de ayudar, contribuir y ser una parte importante en el desarrollo de nuestra comunidad y nuestro barrio. Empezamos por mantener limpio y presentable nuestro local y los alrededores, aun si tenemos que usar nuestros recursos, de modo de crear el entorno adecuado para que nuestros clientes, empleados y vecinos colaboren y formen parte activa de las instituciones públicas y privadas.

Por favor, describe tu recorrido como líder empresaria latina y destaca los momentos clave en la trayectoria de tu empresa.

Entendemos a nuestro cliente y desarrollamos una estrecha relación con él. Con el tiempo, hemos desarrollado nuevos servicios y los hemos ofrecido. En otras palabras, hemos evolucionado en función de los desafíos de cada momento, por ejemplo, en la pandemia. Nos transformamos como empresa para responder a ese desafío específico y reaccionamos con rapidez.

A medida que fuimos creciendo ofrecimos más espacios que nuestras organizaciones han aprovechado para celebrar sus eventos, y eso ha convertido al restaurante en un centro de unión para todos aquellos que quieren conectar con nuestra comunidad.

Aunque de momento es un desafío, unos años después de crecer abrimos el segundo piso para ofrecer allí otro tipo de entretenimiento. Nuestro menú se fue modificando y ahora podemos ofrecer la variedad que necesitamos y sabemos que a nuestros comensales, latinos y no latinos, les gusta. La relación directa que (Jorge y yo) tenemos con la comunidad ha sido un factor de éxito para nuestro negocio. Hemos conseguido una estabilidad esencial en nuestros empleados, de modo que conocen a nuestros clientes y viceversa, lo que crea un ambiente familiar.



BREAKTHROUGH — SEA PHILLY

Sea Philly, established in 2021, tours the Delaware River and Schuylkill River in Philadelphia, showing up to six passengers the cleanest waters in over 100 years. The vessel ARGONAUT, a 27 ft all-wood mahogany boat built in 1961 by Chris Craft, will take passengers on a sunset tour or a wildlife excursion. Owner Georgette Luna is an Accelerate Business alumna. Below, she tells us about Sea Philly’s journey to *excelencia* in Hispanic business.

Tell us about the keys to your business success.

Early on, I understood the power of partnerships and finding support. The chamber is one of those major partnerships! It gave me the reassurance and courage I needed to fill into the role and leader I am today.

What initiatives or projects have you undertaken in the last few years to grow your business?

I have dedicated myself to growth through local business accelerators that allow me to gain

knowledge in areas of weakness. These programs have helped me develop my business and create a community around me. I can scream this from the hilltops: GPHCC is a game-changer! New skills have been a huge stepping stone, but the network they have built around me is something I utilize like a lifeline. I advocate as a partner because, to me, this wasn’t a one-off course or program; it was a full commitment that they would walk the line with me, and they have!

Can you provide examples of resources, partnerships, or collaborations that have furthered your goals as an emerging business/startup?

Our growth has led me to be invited to sit on two advisory panels based on water and environmental education and as a board cohort. I advocate for a more engaging, inclusive, and job-driven waterfront, one that will drive economic growth for the city and for our waterfront communities that are predominantly Black and Brown.

Photography by Messina Martinez Photography

REVELACIÓN – SEA PHILLY

Sea Philly, creada en 2021, recorre los ríos Delaware y Schuylkill de Filadelfia mostrando las aguas más limpias en más de cien años. El Argonaut es un barco de 27 pies íntegramente construido en madera de caoba por Chris Craft en 1961, y lleva a grupos de hasta seis pasajeros en excursiones a ver el atardecer o a explorar la vida silvestre. La propietaria, Georgette Luna, es egresada del programa Accelerate Business y a continuación nos cuenta sobre el recorrido de Sea Philly hasta recibir el premio a la Excelencia de la Cámara de Comercio Hispana.

Cuéntanos sobre las claves del éxito de tu empresa.

Desde el principio me di cuenta del poder de asociarse y de encontrar apoyo. La Cámara es un gran socio en ese sentido. Me dio la seguridad y el valor que necesitaba para asumir el papel de liderazgo que desempeño en el presente.

¿Qué iniciativas o proyectos has encarado en los últimos años para hacer crecer tu negocio?

Me he dedicado a crecer a través de aceleradoras de empresas locales, lo que me permite ganar

conocimiento en áreas de debilidad para mí. Estos programas me han ayudado a desarrollar el negocio y a crear una comunidad a mi alrededor. Puedo gritarlo a los cuatro vientos: la GPHCC es un game-changer! Todo lo que aprendí fue como un gran trampolín para crecer, pero la red que han formado a mi alrededor la uso como un salvavidas. Los llamo mis socios porque lo que encontré no fue un curso o un programa puntual, sino un compromiso total de acompañarme, ¡y eso es lo que hicieron!

“ **Todo lo que aprendí fue como un gran trampolín para crecer . . .** ”

¿Puedes dar ejemplos de recursos, asociaciones o colaboraciones que hayan impulsado los objetivos de tu emprendimiento/empresa emergente?

Nuestro crecimiento ha llevado a que me invitaran a formar parte de dos paneles consultivos basados en la educación sobre el agua y el ambiente, y a integrar la cohorte de la junta directiva. Reivindico una costa más atractiva, integradora y orientada al empleo, que impulse el crecimiento económico de la ciudad y de nuestras comunidades costeras, predominantemente afroamericanos y latinos.



Ray and Esther Alvarez are partners in their family-owned security business, founded in 2016. A&I Security, LLC has over five years of experience providing security services for the Philadelphia Charter School System, colleges, national museums, and special events, including parades, weddings, sports games, etc. Ray is also President/CEO of La Liga del Barrio, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit youth basketball organization sponsored in part by the NBA's Philadelphia 76ers/Sixers Youth Foundation since January 2000. La Liga is the first Latino youth basketball league, annually consisting of 32 boys' and girls' teams of nearly 340 kids ages six to eighteen. The Alvarez's are Accelerate Latinx alumni in addition to other accelerator programs, all the while maintaining their commitment to La Liga.

Tell us about the keys to your business success.

The keys to A&I Security, LLC's business success revolve around community, family, and perseverance. We pride ourselves on serving the community that we live in by offering jobs to those who live directly within the community. A&I Security has an outstanding relationship with our client partners. We strive to have a family atmosphere with both our employees and client relationships. A&I

Security continues to break boundaries within our community by aligning security needs with the community environment by engaging with the local neighbors. We are part of a neighborhood team with a common goal: to protect and serve.

What initiatives or projects have you undertaken in the last few years to grow your business?

A&I Security has focused our attention on growing our internal educational base. We have taken advantage of educational opportunities offered by the Greater Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. To date, the co-owners have been a part of the Accelerate LatinX Cohort 1, Goldman Sachs 10KSB Cohort 23, PALI conference, and Comcast Rise. We have attended and will continue attending countless community networking events.

How have you and/or your business positively impacted your community, business corridor or industry?

A&I Security, LLC continues to positively impact the Philadelphia community by volunteering hours of community service to a nonprofit organization called La Liga del Barrio. Our co-owner, Raymond

Photography by Messina Martinez Photography

Alvarez, has spearheaded this organization for 23 years, and it is completely run by volunteers from within the community. What started as an organization for school-aged children and teens has quickly adapted to the times in an effort to provide a safe outlet for young adults. Not only do our A&I

Security founders volunteer their free time to this nonprofit, but our employees do so as well. To take our impact within the community even further, our clients also host the league at their facilities, further enforcing the camaraderie that we share amongst our community.

POR ENCIMA Y MÁS ALLÁ - A&I SECURITY

Ray y Esther Álvarez son socios en su empresa familiar de seguridad, fundada en 2016. A&I Security, LLC tiene más de cinco años de experiencia prestando servicios de seguridad para el sistema de escuelas charter de Filadelfia, universidades, museos nacionales, y eventos especiales, como desfiles, bodas, eventos deportivos, etc. Ray también es Presidente/CEO de La Liga del Barrio, una organización de baloncesto juvenil sin fines de lucro 501c3 patrocinada en parte por la Philadelphia 76ers/Sixers Youth Foundation de la NBA desde enero de 2000. Es la primera liga juvenil latina de baloncesto, formada cada año por 32 equipos de niños y de niñas, con 340 participantes de 6 a 18 años. Los Álvarez son egresados de Accelerate Latinx, además de otras aceleradoras, y en todo momento mantuvieron su compromiso con La Liga.

Cuéntanos sobre las claves del éxito de tu empresa.

Las claves del éxito de A&I Security, LLC giran en torno a la comunidad, la familia y la perseverancia. Estamos orgullosos de contribuir a la comunidad en la que vivimos ofreciendo trabajo a quienes viven aquí. A&I Security mantiene una excelente relación con sus clientes asociados. Intentamos tener un ambiente familiar tanto con nuestros empleados como en la relación con nuestros clientes. A&I Security sigue rompiendo barreras al alinear las necesidades de seguridad con el ambiente de la comunidad, mediante el compromiso con los vecinos. Formamos parte de un equipo vecinal con un objetivo común: proteger y servir.

¿Qué iniciativas o proyectos has encarado en los últimos años para hacer crecer tu negocio?

A&I Security ha centrado su atención en el crecimiento de su base educativa interna. Hemos aprovechado las oportunidades educativas que ofrece la Cámara de Comercio Hispana. Hasta la fecha, los copropietarios hemos formado parte de la primera cohorte de Accelerate LatinX, de la cohorte 23 de Goldman Sachs 10KSB, de la conferencia PALI y de Comcast Rise. Hemos asistido a numerosos eventos de relaciones profesionales en nuestra comunidad y lo seguiremos haciendo.

¿Qué influencia positiva han tenido ustedes o su empresa en su comunidad, sector o industria?

A&I Security, LLC continúa impactando positivamente a la comunidad de Filadelfia ofreciendo de forma voluntaria horas de servicio comunitario a una organización sin fines de lucro llamada La Liga del Barrio. Uno de los propietarios de la empresa, Raymond Álvarez, lleva 23 años al frente de esta organización, que está íntegramente dirigida por voluntarios de la comunidad. Lo que empezó como una organización para niños y adolescentes se ha adaptado rápidamente a los tiempos en un esfuerzo por ofrecer un lugar seguro a jóvenes adultos. No sólo nuestros fundadores de A&I Security ofrecen voluntariamente su tiempo libre a esta organización sin fines de lucro, sino que también nuestros empleados lo hacen. Para ampliar aún más nuestro impacto en la comunidad, también nuestros clientes participan dando espacio a la liga en sus instalaciones. De este modo, se refuerza todavía más la camaradería entre los miembros de la comunidad.



ACCELERATE — EL MERKURY

What began as an online catering company with pop-up events is now a busy Rittenhouse Square neighborhood staple serving Central American street food and putting churros on the map. Owner Sofia DeLeon is an Accelerate Latinx alumna who has been going full speed since. El Merkury secured a highly coveted spot in Reading Terminal Market and recently added churro carts for catering events. Sofia also launched Tenangos, a dark rum that pays homage to her great-grandmother’s moonshine distillery.

Tell us about the keys to your business success.

Finding talented people who share my beliefs and want to take the journey with me. Growing a company is never a one-woman show; it takes a team, and while the road is never easy, surrounding yourself with talented people you like makes it all the more enjoyable.

Take risks if you’re comfortable. I’ve been a solo-preneur, and sometimes it’s lonely. I see other business owners with partners or family involved and have often wished that was me. But being a solo-preneur means I am at liberty to make my own decisions.

Don’t take no for an answer. Persistence is key to staying in business and getting doors opened. If an opportunity doesn’t come to you, then find it.

What initiatives or projects have you undertaken in the last few years to grow your business?

I have participated in accelerators, like the Tory Burch Fellows and the James Beard Women in Excellence and Leadership program, which have connected me with other women founders.

What are some recent business milestones you have accomplished? What are your goals, and where do you see your business in the next three years?

We have two locations and are in the works for a third one. We launched a churro bike line for events and are working on bringing more for

licensed deals. In the next three years, we want to have at least three more locations in the suburbs and possibly out of the state. In addition, I have launched my rum brand, Tenango, which is now served at all the best bars and restaurants in the city. I hope in three years to be nationally renowned and distributed.

ACCELERAR – EL MERKURY

Lo que empezó como una empresa de catering online con eventos pop up hoy es un concurrido local en el barrio de Rittenhouse Square que sirve comida callejera centroamericana y ha puesto los churros en el mapa. Su propietaria, Sofía DeLeón, pasó por el programa Accelerate Latinx, y desde entonces ha avanzado a toda máquina. El Merkury se aseguró un codiciado lugar en el Reading Terminal Market y recientemente agregó carritos de churros para eventos de catering. Sofía también lanzó una bebida, Tenango, un ron oscuro que rinde homenaje a la destilería de aguardiente casero de su bisabuela.

Cuéntanos sobre las claves del éxito de tu empresa.

Encontrar personas con talento que compartan lo que creo y quieran emprender el viaje conmigo. Desarrollar una empresa nunca es cosa de una sola mujer. Necesitas un equipo y, aunque el camino nunca es fácil, rodearte de personas talentosas que realmente valores lo hace aún más disfrutable.

Asumir riesgos, si te sientes cómoda. He emprendido sola y a veces es algo solitario. Al ver a otros emprendedores que tienen socios o familiares en la empresa, muchas veces he deseado ser como ellos. Pero emprender sola significa tener libertad para tomar mis propias decisiones.

No aceptar un no como respuesta. La persistencia es clave para mantenerse a flote y lograr que se abran puertas. Si no se te presenta una oportunidad, ve a buscarla.

¿Qué iniciativas o proyectos has encarado en los últimos años para hacer crecer tu negocio?

He participado en aceleradoras, como Tory Burch Fellows y el programa de James Beard Women in Excellence and Leadership, que me han puesto en contacto con otras mujeres empresarias y emprendedoras.

¿Qué logros alcanzaste con tu empresa en los últimos tiempos? ¿Cuáles son tus objetivos y dónde ves tu negocio en los próximos tres años?

Tenemos dos locales y estamos preparando un tercero. Hemos lanzado una línea de bicicletas churreras para eventos y estamos trabajando en traer más para hacer acuerdos con licencia. En los próximos tres años queremos tener al menos tres locales más en los suburbios, y posiblemente fuera del estado. Además, personalmente he lanzado mi marca de ron, Tenango, que ahora se sirve en los mejores bares y restaurantes de la ciudad. Espero que en tres años tenga reconocimiento y distribución nacional.

THE POWER OF REFERRALS FOR SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

“99% of our business has come through referrals.”

Referrals are a cornerstone of business.

As Julissa Almonte-Espinal, co-owner of Innovech Software and chair of GPHCC's new business group Latino B2B, says, “99% of our business has come through referrals.”

Despite their significance, it seems many Latino professionals might not be fully leveraging referrals. To address this, GPHCC created the Latino B2B group to offer a platform where Latino entrepreneurs can connect and collaborate to grow profitable new relationships - with the added benefit of strengthening the Latino business ecosystem in Greater Philadelphia.

A Deloitte study revealed that referred-in customers have a 37% higher retention rate than other customers. Additionally, a Nielsen study found that 92% of consumers trust referrals from people they know. This data underscores the unmatched value of a recommendation from a trusted source.

Despite the group being new, members have already received referrals for various services, ranging from financial and marketing to a referral for an award-winning author to present her books at a local school. These are new clients that group members would not have found had they not been part of the group.

However, Latino B2B is not just about the exchange of referrals. Members build relationships with other group participants, laying the foundation for long-lasting professional connections and enhancing critical business skills, from perfecting elevator pitches to identifying new market opportunities. Also, once a month, a Latino B2B member showcases their business to the group through an extended presentation.

Additional benefits include the chance to present business webinars and workshops to the full GPHCC membership.

With a commitment of just an hour a month on Zoom and no associated costs for chamber members, Latino B2B offers tremendous advantages for a minimal time commitment.

For Latino entrepreneurs keen to harness the power of referrals, Latino B2B is currently welcoming new members. A second Latino B2B group is also being established for the upcoming New Year.

To reserve your place, contact GPHCC at memberservices@gphcc.org



ASIAN BANK

UN BANCO PARA TODOS

Asian Bank was founded in 1999 by immigrants to provide funding for underserved individuals and small business owners. As a Minority Depository Institution (MDI) and Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) headquartered in Philadelphia, Asian Bank understands the needs of the communities it serves, and at least 60% of its loans are made to minorities, immigrants, and small business owners throughout Philadelphia.

Community Focus

Migrant entrepreneurs and the businesses they create are the engines of job growth and wealth creation in underserved communities. In addition to traditional banking services, Asian Bank focuses its lending on small business, real estate and affordable housing. By serving low- to moderate-income (LMI), BIPOC, and immigrant communities, Asian Bank works to increase banking access for those who are un- or underbanked. Close community contact and flexible underwriting criteria convert renters into owners and startups into long-term employers.

Our Products

At Asian Bank, we offer a variety of products and services, and our focus begins and ends with meeting the needs of community members. Our products include residential mortgage loans, commercial and small business loans, real estate loans, working capital loans, and Small Business Administration-guaranteed loans.

Leadership and Ownership

The make-up of our board and senior management team is key to our understanding and commitment to serving the needs of our communities. 71% of our board of directors are BIPOC. 83% of senior management are BIPOC, and 50% of senior management are women.

Investing in Our Communities

Every deposit dollar Asian Bank receives goes into funding a loan for one of our community members. During the last twelve months, 33% of Asian Bank loans were made to LMI individuals. 69% of our loans were made to minorities, and 51% were made to minority and immigrant-owned small businesses.

Contact Us

At Asian Bank, we believe in the strength and resilience of our communities and are committed to helping them grow. To discuss a solution for you, please reach out to us using any of the following:

Website: www.theasianbank.com
Email: contact@theasianbank.com
Phone: 215.592.1188



DINE LATINO 2023

Dine Latino Restaurant Week: A Culinary Celebration that Serves More than Food

In the face of unprecedented challenges brought about by the pandemic, the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (GPHCC) launched the Dine Latino initiative, a groundbreaking effort aimed at providing crucial support to Latino-owned restaurants. What began as a lifeline for struggling eateries has evolved into a culinary phenomenon that not only champions diversity but also uplifts local businesses.

The initiative kicked off with a strategic approach, offering technical assistance to restaurant owners through insightful webinars. Simultaneously, the Latino Takeout Weekend was introduced, encouraging diners to savor the flavors of Latino-owned establishments through takeout and delivery options. The resounding success of this dual-pronged approach paved the way for the initiative's evolution into a full-fledged promotional campaign—the Dine Latino Restaurant Week.

The heart of the initiative lies in its commitment to spotlighting the rich tapestry of Latino-owned eateries. Held biannually in spring and fall since 2020, the event consistently features up to thirty independent and locally-owned restaurants. Beyond celebrating the array of Latin cuisine, the initiative aims to showcase the diverse flavors these establishments offer.

What sets Dine Latino Restaurant Week apart is its ability to attract top-tier talent. Award-winning



restaurants and chefs actively participate, elevating the event's profile and bringing well-deserved attention to the culinary excellence within the Latino community. The tangible benefits are reflected in the reports from participating restaurants, citing either maintained or increased revenue and an expanded clientele directly attributable to the campaign.

In 2023, the GPHCC took a significant leap forward with the support of sponsors such as Aramark, CSAA, and the Delivery Guys App. This backing enabled the chamber to extend the reach of Dine Latino Restaurant Week, connecting with a broader audience and fostering greater community engagement. Media partnerships with Rumba radio, El Sol Latino Newspaper, and Visit Philadelphia, coupled with strategic press placements by Cashman & Associates, a prominent PR and marketing firm in Philadelphia, propelled the campaign to new heights.

The staggering success of Dine Latino Restaurant Week in 2023 is underscored by the impressive metrics it achieved. A total of 198 million media impressions and over 1 million social media impressions served as a testament to the initiative's impact, amplifying its reach and solidifying its position as a vital force in championing Latino-owned businesses.

As the aroma of authentic Latino cuisine continues to waft through the streets of Philadelphia, Dine Latino Restaurant Week stands not just as a celebration of food but as a testament to the resilience and vitality of the Latino culinary community.

Photography by Rob Rabena and Stephani Ramones for Visit Philadelphia

PAELLA RECIPE FROM LOCO LUCHO'S LATINO KITCHEN

Chef Luis Liceaga of Loco Lucho's Latino Kitchen was featured at GPHCC's Dine Latino Chef's Tasting this year, where he paired sangria and paella for a delightful evening reminiscent of Old San Juan.



PAELLA

(Serves 12)

Recipe adapted from the book *Cocina Criolla (English Version)* by Carmen Aboy Valldejuli, 2018 Edition.

Ingredients:

2 lbs. chicken, cut in pieces
2 tsp. salt and adobo
9 cups chicken stock
3 cups water
2 tbsp. salt
1 cup olive oil
15 oz. chorizo, cut in pieces
20 oz. longaniza, cut in pieces (you can use hot if you prefer)
2 onions, peeled, finely chopped
2 cubanelle peppers, finely chopped
2 tomatoes, finely chopped
8 large cloves garlic, peeled (crush 2 cloves)
3 packets of Sazón
2 tbsp. of paprika
1 chicken bouillon cube
1 ham bouillon cube
6 cups long grain rice
1 can/jar pimientos
1 can (10.5 oz.) asparagus tips

Directions:

1. Cut chicken pieces in half or quarters, wash, dry, and season with adobo and a bit of salt.
2. Combine the chicken stock and water. Make sure you have 12 cups of the stock and water liquid combination.
3. Place a 20-inch paellera or caldero over two coils of the electric stove or over grates of the gas stove. Heat olive oil and add 2 garlic cloves. Stir until lightly browned (make sure not to overcook), and discard garlic.
4. Add chicken pieces, chorizo and longaniza. Cook for about 10 minutes at moderate heat, stirring occasionally.
5. Add chopped ingredients from onions to leftover garlic cloves to paellera, mix, and sauté at low heat for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Mix in the contents of the Sazón packets and paprika.
7. Add the liquid combination to the paellera, bring to a boil, mix, and cook at moderate heat for 45 minutes.
8. Add rice, mix, bring to a quick boil and cook at a moderate, simmering heat for 30 minutes.
9. Mix with caution and cook until the rice is dry. While drying the paella, it helps to spoon sections of dry rice over the remaining pools of liquid.
10. Turn over rice with a spoon, from bottom to top.
11. Turn off the heat on both coils, but allow the paellera to rest on the stove for 10 minutes.
12. Heat pimientos and asparagus tips in their juice, drain, and garnish paellera.

The Future Can Be Brighter



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WE SALUTE
The Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and all of this year's honorees

Independence Blue Cross is proud to support the **2023 Excelencia in Business Awards Reception**. We recognize the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and all of this year's honorees for supporting the growth and development of Latino-owned businesses in the region.

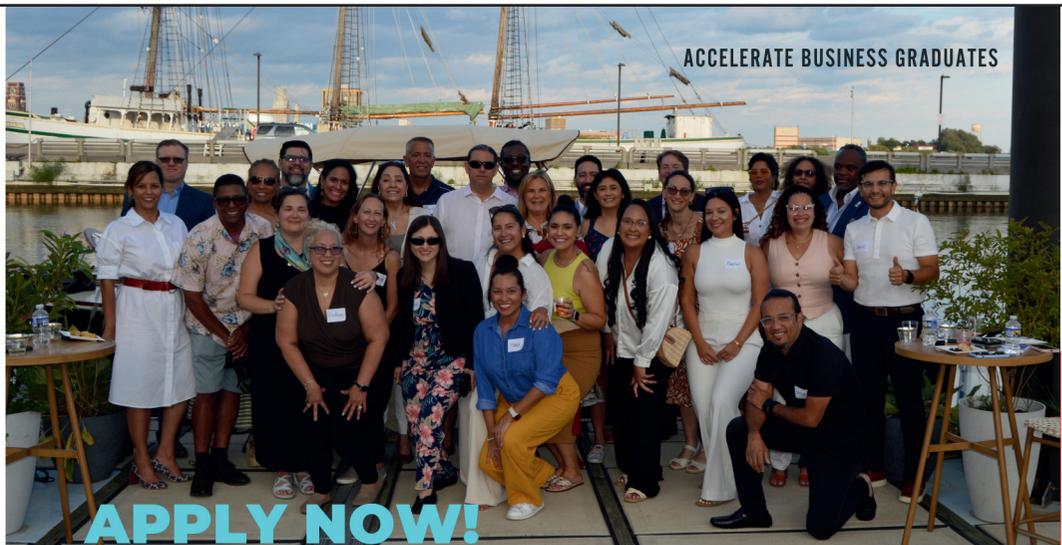
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Congratulations to all of the honorees for their outstanding achievements!

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