

EXITO

GPHCC'S BILINGUAL BUSINESS JOURNAL



EXCELENCIA
IN HISPANIC
BUSINESS AWARDS

THE AMERICAN ECONOMY RELIES
ON IMMIGRANT BUSINESSES:
HERE'S WHY

AREPA GRUB SPOT:
UN LEGADO VENEZOLANO
QUE FLORECE EN LA
ESCENA GASTRONÓMICA
DE FILADEFIA

**BUILD
LATINO**
2025

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GREATER PHILADELPHIA
HISPANIC CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

EXITO

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LETTER FROM PRESIDENT & CEO



Dear Members, Partners, and Friends,

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I welcome you to this special anniversary edition of *Exito*. Over the past year, this publication has become a cornerstone of our efforts to highlight the stories of success, innovation, and perseverance within the Hispanic business community of the Greater Philadelphia region. What began as a vision to provide a platform for our members has blossomed into a space where we celebrate our collective achievements and uplift each other on the path to greater prosperity.

In this issue, we shine a spotlight on the 2024 Excelencia in Hispanic Business Awards. These awards recognize individuals and businesses that embody the values we hold dear at GPHCC: persistence, leadership, breakthrough innovation, and community impact. The categories of the awards are not merely indicators of success—they represent qualities we believe are essential to building a thriving and sustainable business community. The businesses and leaders we honor have demonstrated these attributes in ways that inspire us all.

The Staying Power Award, for instance, recognizes those who have weathered the ups and downs of the economy, standing the test of time through vision, adaptability, and resilience. The Above & Beyond Award celebrates those who go further, giving back to the community in profound and meaningful ways. The Breakthrough Award honors a business that has crossed new thresholds, achieving recognition or growth that sets them apart. Finally, the Accelerate Award highlights the journey of an entrepreneur who has taken advantage of our chamber's programs to fuel their success, demonstrating the power of investing in one's growth.

These are the attributes we celebrate today, and they are the qualities we hope will inspire all our members to aim higher, push further, and continue contributing to the collective success of our community.

Also included in this issue is a directory of GPHCC member businesses—a resource that highlights the diversity and strength of our network. The businesses listed here represent a wide range of industries, each contributing to the economic vitality of the Greater Philadelphia region. I encourage you to take advantage of this directory, seek out opportunities to collaborate, and support your fellow chamber members. Through these connections, we will continue to foster a community of success.

At the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, we believe that entrepreneurship is the key to building wealth, strengthening families, and lifting entire communities. This belief drives everything we do—from our advocacy efforts to our programs that empower Latino-owned businesses with the resources, education, and networks they need to thrive. This past year has been filled with many milestones, and *Exito* has played a crucial role in documenting the journey of our members and their impact on the regional economy.

As we mark this anniversary, I am reminded of the collective strength we possess. Our business community has faced economic challenges, societal shifts, and evolving market demands, but through it all, we have shown a firm commitment to growth and innovation. Together, we are setting the stage for a more inclusive and prosperous future.

Looking ahead, I am excited for what is to come. In the coming year, GPHCC will continue to push boundaries, create new opportunities, and celebrate the excellence that runs through the heart of our community. I invite each of you to stay engaged with the chamber, participate in our initiatives, and continue sharing your stories of success and resilience with us.

Thank you for being an essential part of this journey. Your support, dedication, and contributions are what make *Exito* and our chamber strong. Together, we are not just building businesses—we are building a legacy.

With warm regards and deep gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Rodríguez', written in a cursive style.

Jennifer I. Rodríguez, MCP
GPHCC President & CEO
Editor-in-Chief

GPHCC BY THE NUMBERS

1,235

The number of attendees to GPHCC events the first 10 months of 2024.

60%

of GPHCC members are small businesses.

389.8M

The media impressions generated for Dine Latino Restaurant Week, Fall 2024.

43%

The revenue growth reported by graduates of the Accelerate Business program.

26

The number of businesses that graduated from Build Latino in Spring 2024.

\$60,000

in micro grants awarded in 2024.

91

average per day referrals from the Website business directory in the first 10 months of 2024.

218

The number of jobs created and retained by Accelerate graduates.

ABOUT THE 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.

VERIZON'S SMALL BUSINESS DIGITAL READY FUELS LATINO BUSINESS GROWTH IN PHILADELPHIA



*By Adriana Dawson
Community Engagement Director, East Region
Verizon*

Verizon's Small Business Digital Ready is a powerful, free online resource designed to help small businesses thrive in the digital age. As one of the fastest-growing sectors of the local economy, Latino entrepreneurs are vital to Philadelphia's small business community. Digital Ready offers them the tools, skills, and support needed to succeed in an increasingly digital world, empowering these businesses to reach new heights of success.

Support for Latino-Owned Businesses in Philadelphia

Latino-owned businesses in Philadelphia face unique challenges, ranging from limited access to capital to language barriers, but they are also known for their resilience and innovative spirit. Digital Ready is tailored to meet these challenges head-on. The platform provides free, bilingual courses that cover essential topics such as digital marketing, e-commerce, financial management, and cybersecurity. These courses are available on-demand, making it easy for busy entrepreneurs to learn at their own pace while juggling the demands of running their businesses.

What sets this platform apart is its emphasis on personalized learning paths. Business owners can cus-

tomize their experience to focus on the areas most relevant to them, whether they are building their digital presence from scratch or looking to optimize their existing operations. The platform recognizes the unique needs of the Hispanic business community, offering content and resources that resonate with their experiences.

Access to Coaching and Local Networking

Digital Ready goes beyond just education. Business owners can also benefit from one-on-one coaching with industry experts. This personalized approach provides invaluable guidance, helping business owners tackle specific challenges, whether it's navigating the digital landscape or expanding their customer base. Additionally, the platform fosters networking opportunities, allowing entrepreneurs to connect with local business leaders and peers in the Philadelphia area, building a support system that extends beyond the digital realm.

Financial Grants for Growth

The new Small Business Funding Marketplace powered by Next Street allows Digital Ready users to access courses, expert-led workshops, networking, and find funding from a network of responsible capital partners. The Small

Business Funding Marketplace is another free tool and resource designed to empower small businesses by providing a carefully curated set of small business loans and grants in one streamlined marketplace. Users can filter across many small business capital providers and financial products to see what they qualify for based on their business characteristics and compare terms across their options. This funding can be a game-changer, especially for small businesses that are looking to scale but lack the financial resources to do so.

Strengthening the Philadelphia Hispanic Business Community

Verizon's Small Business Digital Ready platform is part of a broader commitment to digital inclusion and community growth. By partnering with organizations like the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Verizon ensures that the platform reaches the community in a meaningful way. This initiative aligns with the company's efforts to bridge the digital divide in Philadelphia, helping underserved communities gain the tools and resources they need to succeed in the modern economy.

**To learn more, visit
www.bit.ly/gphcc-verizon.**

GPHCC PROGRAM NEWS: SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS THAT HELP BUSINESSES START, GROW AND SCALE



Photography by GPHCC Staff

GPHCC 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 the region's companies, government, and institutions.

CHISPA Workshops

In collaboration with member businesses, GPHCC provides critical information for Latino entrepreneurs in a webinar format. From finance to marketing, business owners can learn how to take their business a step forward with the topics presented in CHISPA workshops.

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.

Build Latino

Our Spanish language program helps emerging contractors develop business fundamentals and practices necessary to avoid the common pitfalls of the industry and successfully compete for contracts.

To learn more, visit www.philahispanicchamber.org.



GREATER PHILADELPHIA
HISPANIC CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

CHISPA

These transformative workshops deliver expert insights and actionable strategies designed to help small businesses thrive. Whether you're launching a venture or scaling to new heights, CHISPA is your spark for growth.

Upcoming Webinars

TUES

10

DEC

ASSESSING YOUR COMPANY'S
FINANCIAL NEEDS PRESENTED
BY TD BANK
(VIRTUAL)

WED

15

JAN

ANALYZING YOUR COMPETITION
PRESENTED BY TD BANK
(VIRTUAL)

WED

29

JAN

THE MARKETING CALENDAR
PRESENTED BY RIOS MARKETING
(VIRTUAL)

WED

12

FEB

DESIGN THINKING WITH
MICHELLE HISTAND
(VIRTUAL)

VISIT [GPHCC.ORG](https://gphcc.org) TO
LEARN MORE



BOARD MEMBER PROFILES



NATILY SANTOS
Vice President,
Responsible Sourcing,
Global Supply Chain & GPO
Aramark + Avendra
International
GPHCC Board Treasurer

Natily Santos is a seasoned leader with over 20 years of experience in the Hospitality and Food & Beverage industry. As Vice President of Responsible Sourcing, her focus on sustainable procurement and supplier diversity has driven business growth and strengthened local communities.

Recognized by the *Philadelphia Business Journal's* 40 under 40 and Pennsylvania's 100 Most Influential Latinos, Natily is dedicated to mentorship and community engagement. She founded Impacto, Aramark's Hispanic and Latino Employee Resource Group, and serves on Aramark's Executive Diversity Council, promoting inclusivity and empowerment.

Natily serves on several boards, including the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of

Commerce and Prosperity, where she supports mentoring and economic development. She holds an MBA from Temple University's Fox School of Business and a BS in International Business from Johnson & Wales University. Originally from New York City, she now lives in Philadelphia with her husband and son.

What drives your passion to serve on the boards of organizations like GPHCC?

My passion for serving on boards like GPHCC comes from a deep commitment to local economic growth and community empowerment. Growing up in NYC with parents who immigrated from the Dominican Republic and became entrepreneurs, I saw firsthand the value of hard work and community support. Serving on these boards allows me to contribute to the success of underrepresented businesses, just like those I grew up around.

It's fulfilling to see the tangible impact of GPHCC in increasing Hispanic entrepreneurs and ensuring their businesses thrive. Being on the board gives me a platform to advocate for policies supporting Hispanic businesses while mentoring and inspiring the next generation of leaders. It's rewarding to give back and ensure others have the support they need to succeed.



NATALIA DOMINGUEZ-BUCKLEY
Director, Bureau of
Redevelopment, Capital
and Debt
Governor's Budget Office -
Commonwealth of
Pennsylvania
GPHCC Board Secretary

Natalia has over 20 years of experience in public finance and economic development. As Director of the Bureau of Redevelopment, Capital & Debt for the Governor's Budget Office, she oversees multi-billion-dollar bond issuances, advises state officials on bond needs, and manages major capital projects, including Redevelopment Assistance Capital Projects (RACP) and Public Improvement Projects (PIP).

Previously, Natalia served as First Deputy City Treasurer for Philadelphia, overseeing the city's \$9 billion debt portfolio, cash management, and bond issuance. Before that, she worked at Santander Bank, managing government and nonprofit

relationships, and held leadership roles with the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC).

Natalia holds a BA in International Relations and an MGA in Public Finance from the University of Pennsylvania. She serves on several nonprofit boards, including the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the Philadelphia Energy Authority. She was appointed Chairwoman of the State Public School Building Authority (SPSBA) and Pennsylvania Higher Education Facilities Authority (PHEFA) by the governor.

Her accolades include the *Philadelphia Business Journal's* 2020 Minority Business Leaders Award and recognition as one of Pennsylvania's Top 100 Most Influential Latinos.

What aspect of GPHCC's mission resonates most with you?

What resonates with me is that we are here to support every Latino business in the Greater Philadelphia region, regardless of size. We aim to foster growth and build wealth in the Latino community.

EXCELENCIA IN HISPANIC BUSINESS

THIS YEAR'S AWARDEES ARE A TESTAMENT TO THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

In a world where resilience, vision, and community drive business forward, the Excelencia in Hispanic Business Awards shine a spotlight on the remarkable leaders redefining success in Greater Philadelphia's Hispanic business landscape. This year, the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (GPHCC) honors four extraordinary winners whose achievements speak to the power of persistence, innovation, and dedication to collective progress.

Vivian Isaak of Magnum Group Inc. is celebrated with the Staying Power Award, a tribute to her unwavering commitment to excellence and

the longevity of her business in an ever-evolving market. The International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 21 receives the Above & Beyond Award. They are recognized for their volunteerism and service to GPHCC's Build Latino program —raising the bar on what it means to foster growth and opportunity. Antonio Fiol-Silva of SITIO architecture + urbanism is awarded the Breakthrough Award, a testament to his bold strides in pushing boundaries, breaking into new markets, and setting new standards for small business success. Finally, Edward Garcia of Queen & Rook Game Cafe is honored with

the Accelerate Award, celebrating the remarkable journey of a GPHCC entrepreneurship program graduate who has turned knowledge into action, leveraging every opportunity to propel his business to greater heights.

These honorees don't just lead their respective fields; they embody the spirit of an energetic community that thrives on innovation, courage, and the continued pursuit of excellence. Together, they are an inspiration for future generations of Hispanic entrepreneurs to follow, turning challenges into stepping-stones and dreams into tangible successes.

EXCELENCIA EN LOS NEGOCIOS HISPANOS

LOS GALARDONADOS DE ESTE AÑO TESTIMONIAN EL ESPÍRITU EMPRENDEDOR

En un mundo en el que la resiliencia, la visión y la comunidad impulsan los negocios, los Premios a la Excelencia en los Negocios Hispánicos destacan a los líderes que están redefiniendo el éxito en el panorama empresarial hispano de la región de Filadelfia. Este año, la GPHCC rinde honor a cuatro extraordinarios ganadores, cuyos logros hablan del poder de la persistencia, la innovación y la dedicación al progreso colectivo.

Vivian Isaak, de Magnum Group Inc., recibe el premio Staying Power, un tributo a su inquebrantable compromiso con la excelencia y la longevidad de su empresa en un

mercado en constante evolución. El Consejo de Distrito 21 del Sindicato Internacional de Pintores y Oficios Afines recibe el premio Above & Beyond Award. Se les reconoce por su voluntariado y servicio al programa Build Latino de la GPHCC que fomenta el crecimiento y las oportunidades. Antonio Fiol-Silva, de SITIO architecture + urbanism, recibe el premio Breakthrough, un testimonio de sus avances superando límites, irrumpiendo en nuevos mercados y estableciendo nuevos parámetros para el éxito de las pequeñas empresas. Finalmente, Edward García, de Queen & Rook Game Cafe, es galardonado

con el premio Accelerate, que celebra la extraordinaria trayectoria de un graduado del programa de emprendimientos de la GPHCC que ha transformado el conocimiento en acción, aprovechando oportunidades para impulsar su negocio.

Estas personas no solo lideran sus campos, sino que encarnan el espíritu de una comunidad que se nutre de la innovación, el coraje y la búsqueda continua de la excelencia. Juntos, son una inspiración para las futuras generaciones de emprendedores hispanos, haciendo de los retos peldaños y de los sueños, éxitos tangibles.



For over three decades, Vivian Isaak has led a linguistic transformation from her Philadelphia headquarters, establishing Magnum Group Inc. as a cornerstone of multilingual communication. Founded in 1992 to connect a global network of language specialists—well before the digital era—Magnum has evolved from a small home office into an international business, managing projects across 30 countries. Isaak’s dedication to bridging cultures through language has driven this growth, marked by perseverance and innovation. Recognized among the Top 50 Women-Owned Businesses in Pennsylvania and as a WBENC Leadership Award recipient, Isaak has guided Magnum through economic challenges, embracing technology, community engagement, and impactful initiatives. As the Staying Power Award recipient, she embodies resilience, building a legacy that transcends language.

What inspired you to start your business?

Thirty-two years ago, when Magnum Group was founded, the business landscape was limited by geography. Translation needs were typically managed at corporations by in-house translation departments and local freelance

translators working independently or in small teams. The internet changed our industry and gave us access to linguists around the globe. I seized this opportunity to start my business and actively contribute to elevating the translation industry to a whole new level.

What do you value most in your professional life?

I value learning the most.

What’s one habit you have that your team might find amusing or surprising?

Color-coding.

How do you keep your workspace from turning into a chaotic mess? Or do you embrace creative chaos?

Checklists and documenting processes.

What is the most rewarding aspect of owning your business?

Freedom to shape my own vision and see the direct impact of my efforts on growth and success.

What qualities do you value most in an employee?

Reliability, adaptability, teamwork, problem-solving, and communication.

What is your business’s greatest strength?

Being relentless about continuous improvement, never skimping on quality.

What is one thing you wish you had known before starting your business?

The importance of building a strong network early on. Connections with mentors, industry peers, and potential clients can significantly accelerate growth and help navigate challenges more effectively.

What’s a key lesson you’ve learned from a failure or setback?

Success often comes from resilience. Keep going. Don’t give up.

Who has been your biggest influence or mentor in your business journey?

Over the years, I’ve had a few great mentors who provided invaluable guidance and support, including my Vistage coach and my WBENC network of amazing women entrepreneurs.

What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Stay persistent, embrace failure as a learning opportunity, and don’t be afraid to take calculated risks.

What is one change you’d like to see in the local business community?

More focus on partnerships and shared resources.

What motivates you to keep going when things get tough?

When things get tough, I’m motivated by my passion for my work and the support of my team.

What is your current state of mind?

Trying to stay focused and motivated to be ready to tackle what comes next.

What’s one habit you’ve adopted that has made a significant impact on your business?

Taking notes and following up.

How do you start your day, and what’s the first thing you do after waking up?

The first thing I do is play with my dog in bed. Then, I get up, make a French press coffee, take my dog for a walk and have breakfast. I check

~continued on p. 31

Photography by Messina Martinez Photography

Por más de tres décadas, Vivian Isaak ha liderado una transformación lingüística desde su sede en Filadelfia, estableciendo a Magnum Group Inc. como un pilar en la comunicación multilingüe. Fundada en 1992 para conectar una red global de especialistas en idiomas, mucho antes de la era digital, Magnum ha evolucionado de una pequeña oficina en casa a una empresa internacional que gestiona proyectos en más de 30 países. La dedicación de Isaak a unir culturas a través del lenguaje ha impulsado este crecimiento, marcado por la persistencia y la innovación. Reconocida entre las 50 Empresas Propiedad de Mujeres Más Importantes en Pensilvania y galardonada con el premio de liderazgo de WBENC, Isaak ha guiado a Magnum en medio de desafíos económicos, adoptando la tecnología, el compromiso comunitario y proyectos de impacto. Como recipiente del premio Staying Power, ella encarna la resiliencia, construyendo un legado que trasciende el lenguaje.

¿Qué te inspiró para crear tu empresa?

Hace 32 años, cuando se fundó Magnum Group, el panorama de los negocios estaba limitado por la geografía. Las necesidades de traducción de las empresas solían ser gestionadas por departamentos de traducción internos y por traductores locales independientes o en pequeños equipos. Internet cambió nuestro sector y nos dio acceso a profesionales a través de todo el mundo. Aproveché esa oportunidad para poner en marcha mi empresa y elevar el sector de la traducción a un nuevo nivel.

¿Qué es lo que más valoras en tu vida profesional?

Lo que más valoro es aprender.

¿Qué hábito tuyo puede divertir o sorprender a tu equipo?

Codificar por colores.

¿Cómo evitas que tu espacio de trabajo se convierta en un caos?, ¿o te dejas llevar por el caos creativo?

Con listas de comprobación y documentación de procesos.

¿Cuál es el aspecto más gratificante de tener tu propio negocio?

La libertad para dar forma a mi visión y ver el impacto directo de mis esfuerzos en el crecimiento y el éxito.

¿Cuáles son las cualidades que más valoras en un empleado?

Fiabilidad, adaptabilidad, trabajo en equipo, resolución de problemas, comunicación.

¿Cuál es el punto fuerte de tu empresa?

Ser implacables en la mejora continua, sin escatimar en calidad.

¿Qué desearías haber sabido antes de empezar tu negocio?

La importancia de crear una red sólida desde el principio. Las conexiones con mentores colegas en la industria y clientes potenciales pueden acelerar significativamente el crecimiento y ayudar a enfrentar los desafíos con mayor eficacia.

¿Qué es lo más importante que has aprendido de una falla?

El éxito suele venir de la resiliencia. Continúa. No te rindas.

¿Quién ha sido tu principal influencia o mentor en tu trayectoria empresarial?

A lo largo de los años, he tenido unos cuantos mentores estupendos que me han dado orientación y gran apoyo, como mi coach de Vistage y mi red WBENC de mujeres empresarias increíbles.

¿Qué consejo darías a los emprendedores aspirantes?

Sé persistente, toma el fracaso como una oportunidad de aprender y no temas correr riesgos calculados.

¿Qué cambio te gustaría ver en la comunidad empresaria local?

Más enfoque en trabajar juntos y compartir recursos.

¿Qué te motiva a seguir adelante cuando hay dificultades?

La pasión por mi trabajo y el apoyo de mi equipo.

¿Cuál es tu estado de ánimo actual?

Intento mantenerme concentrada y motivada para afrontar lo que venga.

¿Qué hábito has adoptado y ha tenido un impacto significativo en tu negocio?

Tomar notas y dar seguimiento.

¿Cómo empiezas el día y qué es lo primero que haces al despertarte?

Primero juego con mi perro en la cama. Me levanto, preparo un café con prensa francesa, saco a pasear a mi perro y desayuno. Reviso los emails en el teléfono y hago 20 minutos de pilates antes de sentarme al escritorio.

¿Cuál es la herramienta o el truco de productividad sin el cual no podrías vivir?

Los bloques de tiempo. Me ayudan a organizar el día y a concentrarme en las tareas.

¿Cómo te desconectas y te relajas después de un largo día de trabajo?

Tengo una cita con mi sillón de masajes y escucho audiolibros.

¿Con qué frecuencia revisas y ajustas los objetivos y las estrategias de tu negocio?

Tengo un plan de negocio a cinco años, con evaluaciones anuales y revisiones trimestrales.

¿Cómo equilibras el trabajo con la vida personal?

Este es un desafío constante para mí, ya que la balanza suele inclinarse a favor del trabajo.



In the dynamic world of architecture and urban planning, few names resonate as powerfully as Antonio Fiol-Silva, the visionary founder of SITIO architecture + urbanism, the 2024 Breakthrough Award winner. Since establishing the firm in 2016, Fiol-Silva has led SITIO on a remarkable growth trajectory, turning a modest startup into one of Philadelphia's most respected architectural practices. With its revenue soaring from an initial \$0.25 million to an impressive average of \$5 million over the past three years, SITIO has expanded its service offerings beyond architecture to include urban planning, interior design, landscape architecture, and more.

Fiol-Silva's innovative approach and SITIO's impact have earned them high-profile recognition, including awards from the American Institute of Architects and the Urban Land Institute. Notable projects like 2500 League Island Boulevard and The Chestnut at University City have solidified SITIO's reputation as a firm capable of competing with global giants like Gensler and SOM.

For Fiol-Silva, architecture is more than buildings; it's about community, culture, and connection. His firm's mission-driven ethos reflects a commitment to leveraging design

as a tool for social impact, with a particular focus on elevating Latino talent in the industry. As SITIO looks to the future, its dedication to creating places that resonate on physical, economic, and cultural levels will continue to shape, not only the built environment, but also the communities it serves. Antonio Fiol-Silva's work is a testament to the power of visionary design and its ability to influence urban landscapes profoundly.

What inspired you to start your business?
Leaving unnecessary confines behind.

What do you value most in your professional life?
Relationships and results.

What's one habit you have that your team might find amusing or surprising?
Not sure anything would surprise them.

How do you keep your workspace from turning into a chaotic mess? Or do you embrace creative chaos?
I embrace very organized creative chaos.

What is the most rewarding aspect of owning your business?
Self-accountability.

What qualities do you value most in an employee?
Enthusiasm and perseverance.

What is your business's greatest strength?
Creativity - and situational awareness.

What is one thing you wish you had known before starting your business?
Ignorance is bliss!

What's a key lesson you've learned from a failure or setback?
Never assume people know what you are capable of.

Who has been your biggest influence or mentor in your business journey?
A suave architect running another practice - my wife, Elizabeth.

What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?
"Damn the torpedoes!"

What is one change you'd like to see in the local business community?
Heightened vision and ambition.

What motivates you to keep going when things get tough?
Visualizing the moment that "All's well that ends well."

What is your current state of mind?
Amazed and optimistic.

What's one habit you've adopted that has made a significant impact on your business?
Staying current and staying connected.

How do you start your day, and what's the first thing you do after waking up?
Eyes wide open.

What's your go-to productivity hack or tool that you can't live without?
Inspiration!

How do you unwind and relax after a long day of work?
Family.

How often do you review and adjust your business goals and strategies?
It's ongoing.

How do you balance work and personal life?
"Use the force, Luke."

En el dinámico mundo de la arquitectura y el urbanismo, pocos nombres resuenan tanto como el de Antonio Fiol-Silva, el visionario fundador de SITIO architecture + urbanism, distinguido con el premio Breakthrough 2024. Desde que fundó la firma en 2016, ha llevado a SITIO por una notable trayectoria de crecimiento, convirtiendo un modesto startup en uno de los estudios de arquitectura más respetados de Filadelfia. Con ingresos que se han disparado desde el cuarto de millón de dólares hasta un impresionante promedio de 5 millones en los últimos tres años, SITIO ha ampliado su cartera de servicios más allá de la arquitectura para incluir la planificación urbana, el diseño de interiores y la arquitectura del paisaje, entre otros.

El innovador enfoque de Fiol-Silva y el impacto de SITIO les han valido altos reconocimientos, incluyendo premios del American Institute of Architects y el Urban Land Institute. Proyectos notables como 2500 League Island Boulevard y The Chestnut en la ciudad universitaria han destacado a SITIO como una firma capaz de competir con gigantes mundiales como Gensler y SOM.

Para Fiol-Silva la arquitectura no se limita a los edificios: es comunidad, cultura y conexión. La misión de su estudio refleja el compromiso de aprovechar el diseño como herramienta de impacto social, especialmente para impulsar el talento latino. Con la vista puesta en el futuro, la dedicación de SITIO a crear espacios con resonancias a nivel físico, económico y cultural seguirá dando forma no solo al ambiente construido, sino también a las comunidades. La obra de Antonio Fiol-Silva es un testimonio del poder del diseño visionario y de su capacidad para influir profundamente en el paisaje urbano.

¿Qué te inspiró para crear tu empresa?

Trascender límites innecesarios.



¿Qué es lo que más valoras en tu vida profesional?

Las relaciones y los resultados.

¿Qué hábito tuyo puede divertir o sorprender a tu equipo?

No creo que nada los sorprenda.

¿Cómo evitas que tu espacio de trabajo se convierta en un caos?, ¿o te dejas llevar por el caos creativo?

Abrazo el caos creativo muy organizado.

¿Cuál es el aspecto más gratificante de tener tu propio negocio?

Ser responsable por mí mismo.

¿Cuáles son las cualidades que más valoras en un empleado?

Entusiasmo y perseverancia.

¿Cuál es el punto fuerte de tu empresa?

La creatividad. Y la consciencia situacional.

¿Qué desearías haber sabido antes de empezar tu negocio?

La ignorancia es una bendición.

¿Qué es lo más importante que has aprendido de una falla?

Nunca des por sentado que la gente sabe de lo que eres capaz.

¿Quién ha sido tu principal influencia o mentor en tu trayectoria empresarial?

Una agradable arquitecta quien maneja otra práctica: mi esposa Elizabeth.

¿Qué consejo darías a emprendedores aspirantes?

"¡Al diablo con los torpedos!"

¿Qué cambio te gustaría ver en la comunidad empresarial local?

Mayor visión y ambición.

¿Qué te motiva a seguir adelante cuando hay dificultades?

Visualizar el momento en que "A buen fin no hay mal principio".

¿Cuál es tu estado de ánimo actual?

Fascinado, optimista.

¿Qué hábito has adoptado y ha tenido un impacto significativo en tu negocio?

Mantenerme al día y conectado.

¿Cómo empiezas el día y qué es lo primero que haces al despertarte?

Abrir bien los ojos.

¿Cuál es la herramienta o el truco de productividad sin el cual no podrías vivir?

¡La inspiración!

¿Cómo te desconectas y te relajas después de un largo día de trabajo?

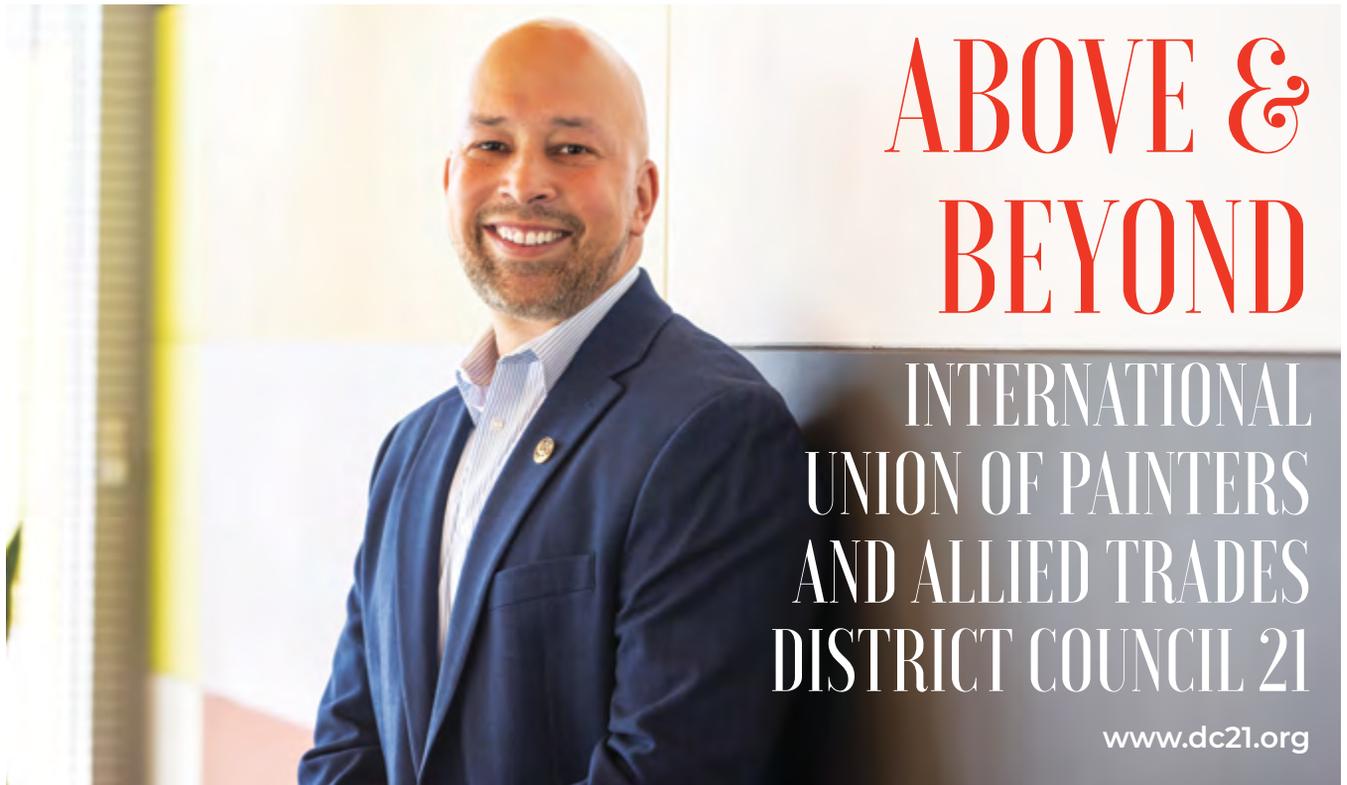
Familia.

¿Con qué frecuencia revisas y ajustas los objetivos y las estrategias de tu negocio?

Todo el tiempo.

¿Cómo equilibras el trabajo con la vida personal?

"Usa la fuerza, Luke"



As one of the region's most active and community-driven unions, IUPAT District Council 21 is recognized for its exceptional commitment to advancing opportunities and advocating for its members across the finishing trades. Formed in 1996 through the consolidation of Philadelphia's Painters and Allied Trade Unions and strengthened by a 2022 merger with District Council 711, this organization represents over 6,000 skilled members across Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. With an accredited apprenticeship program and a mission dedicated to ensuring top wages and benefits, District Council 21 exemplifies the values of collective bargaining and support for workers and their families.

What motivates your organization to go above and beyond in serving the Latino business community?

Our motivation comes from just visualizing and understanding the challenges that the Latino community faces. Our organization strives to be diverse and inclusive. By serving the Latino community, we impact and support the local entrepreneurs/business owners, and in doing so, we also grow as an organization.

What's the most impactful initiative your organization has launched?

The most impactful would have to be the relationship we've cultivated through working with the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and their Build Latino Program. We collaborated and

volunteered our location and staff to provide resources to those who didn't have them at their disposal.

If your organization had a motto, what would it be?

In short, solidarity, education and craftsmanship would be our motto. IUPAT District Council 21 provides career opportunities to workers in the construction industry, and we strive to ensure the best wages and benefits.

What is the most important value that guides your organization's decisions?

At the core of what we represent are integrity and excellence. We uphold ethical standards, pride ourselves in our craftsmanship, and always strive for improvement.

Photography by Messina Martinez Photography

Lo Consejo Distrital 21 del IUPAT, uno de los sindicatos más activos y comunitarios de la región, es reconocido por su excepcional compromiso con el fomento de oportunidades y la defensa de sus miembros en todos los oficios de pintura y afines. Formada en 1996 mediante la consolidación de los Sindicatos de Pintores y Afines de Filadelfia y reforzada por una fusión en 2022 con el Consejo Distrital 711, esta organización representa a más de 6,000 miembros cualificados a través de Pensilvania, Nueva Jersey y Delaware. Con un programa de aprendices acreditado y una dedicación a garantizar los mejores salarios y beneficios, el Consejo Distrital 21 ejemplifica los valores de la negociación colectiva y el apoyo a los trabajadores y sus familias.

¿Qué motiva a la organización a ir más allá en su contribución a la comunidad empresarial latina?

Nuestra motivación proviene simplemente de observar y comprender los desafíos a los que se enfrenta la comunidad latina. Nos esforzamos por ser diversos e inclusivos. Al contribuir a la comunidad latina, llegamos a los emprendedores y dueños de negocios locales y los apoyamos, y al hacerlo, también crecemos como organización.

¿Cuál es la iniciativa de mayor repercusión que ha puesto en marcha su organización?

Lo más importante ha sido la relación que hemos cultivado con la Cámara de Comercio Hispana de la Región de Filadelfia y su programa Build Latino. Colaboramos y ofrecemos voluntariamente

nuestro local y nuestro personal para brindar recursos a quienes no los tenían a su disposición.

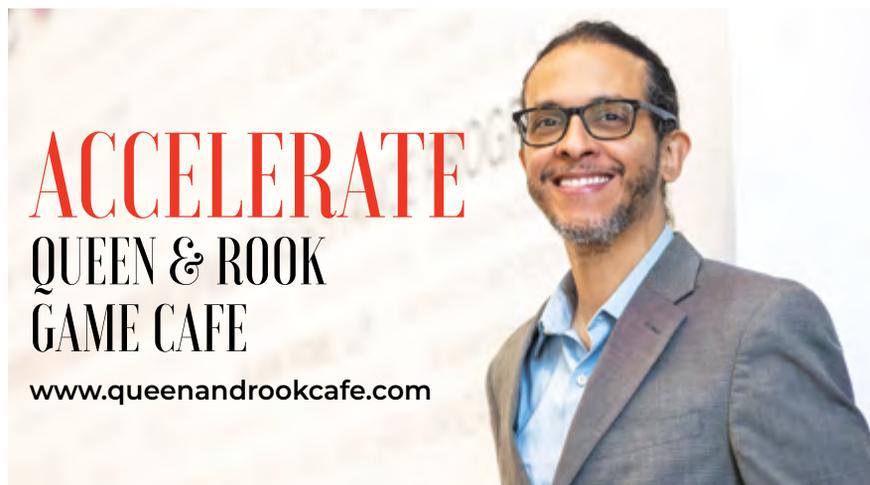
Si su organización tuviera un lema, ¿cuál sería?

En resumen, nuestro lema sería: solidaridad, educación y oficio. El Consejo Distrital 21 del IUPAT ofrece oportunidades de carrera a los trabajadores del sector de la construcción, y nos esforzamos por garantizar los mejores salarios y beneficios.

¿Cuál es el valor más importante que guía las decisiones de su organización?

La integridad y la excelencia son la esencia de lo que representamos. Mantenemos estándares éticos, nos enorgullecemos de nuestros oficios y siempre nos esforzamos por mejorar.





Edward Garcia, the owner of Queen & Rook Game Cafe, is the 2024 Accelerate Award winner, recognizing his exceptional strategic vision as an entrepreneur. Garcia's journey transformed when he joined the GPHCC's Accelerate Latinx program—an essential lifeline that came just six months after his cafe opened, during the pandemic. The program provided not only survival strategies but also a roadmap for growth, allowing Garcia to recently expand into a space three times larger than the original.

Through the program Garcia forged invaluable connections with fellow CEOs, creating a support network that has been crucial for navigating the complexities of expansion and funding. The results are remarkable: in just two years, Queen & Rook has increased its revenue by 80% and expanded its staff by more than 50%. Looking to the future, Garcia plans to replicate his success, with ambitious goals of opening 3 to 6 new locations within the next five years, leveraging the resources and insights gained from the program along the way.

What inspired you to start your business?

We were inspired to create a place that we would want to go to and spend time in with our kids and our friends.

What do you value most in your professional life?

I value partnerships with other small businesses the most.

What's one habit you have that your team might find amusing or surprising?

I am a news junkie, especially politics.

How do you keep your workspace from turning into a chaotic mess? Or do you embrace creative chaos?

We are a pretty chaotic and creative workplace. I always try to get to "yes" and rarely turn down an opportunity.

What is the most rewarding aspect of owning your business?

Being able to build something from nothing and to nurture it with a team you put together.

What qualities do you value most in an employee?

Optimism, creativity, and loyalty.

What is your business's greatest strength?

I think our customer loyalty and investment are our greatest strengths.

What is one thing you wish you had known before starting your business?

I wish I had known how many hours a week it would take to make it.

What's a key lesson you've learned from a failure or setback?

Sometimes, you can do all the right things, and it can still go wrong.

Who has been your biggest influence or mentor in your business journey?

It sounds corny, but I think about what Walt Disney created, especially in the first 30 years.

What advice would you give to aspiring entrepreneurs?

Learn all you can from those around you.

What is one change you'd like to see in the local business community?

I think it would be better to see the community come together in times of need before businesses fail and not just celebrate their successes. I think we should be more open with our struggles.

What motivates you to keep going when things get tough?

I really believe in how we make people feel when they visit us.

What is your current state of mind?

Optimistic.

What's one habit you've adopted that has made a significant impact on your business?

Do the hard things first.

How do you start your day, and what's the first thing you do after waking up?

I listen to the news and get a handle on what is happening in the world.

What's your go-to productivity hack or tool that you can't live without?

We use Slack every day, and it has made our communications so much easier.

How do you unwind and relax after a long day of work?

I usually watch a little TV before bed, even if it's a late workday.

How often do you review and adjust your business goals and strategies?

We have a three-year plan we are following and will update at the three-year mark.

How do you balance work and personal life?

It is really difficult, but I try to make sure that we have family outings at least once a week, no matter what.

Photography by Messina Martinez Photography

Edward García, dueño de Queen & Rook Game Cafe, ha recibido el premio Accelerate 2024 en reconocimiento a su excepcional visión estratégica como emprendedor. La trayectoria de García se transformó al unirse al programa Accelerate Latinx de la GPHCC, un salvavidas que le llegó apenas seis meses después de abrir su cafetería, durante la pandemia. El programa le dió, además de estrategias de supervivencia, una guía para crecer, lo que permitió a García expandir a un local tres veces mayor.

A través del programa, García forjó conexiones invaluable con otros CEOs, creando una red que ha resultado crucial para navegar por las complejidades de la expansión y el financiamiento. Los resultados son notables: en sólo dos años, Queen & Rook ha incrementado sus ingresos en un 80% y ha ampliado su personal en más de un 50%. De cara al futuro, García planea repetir su logro, con el ambicioso objetivo de abrir entre tres y seis nuevos locales en los próximos cinco años, aprovechando los recursos y conocimientos adquiridos en el programa.

¿Qué te inspiró para crear tu empresa?

Queríamos crear un lugar al que deseáramos ir a pasar tiempo con nuestros hijos y amigos.

¿Qué es lo que más valoras en tu vida profesional?

Lo que más valoro es trabajar en conjunto con otras empresas pequeñas.

¿Qué hábito tuyo puede divertir o sorprender a tu equipo?

Soy adicto a las noticias, especialmente a la política.

¿Cómo evitas que tu espacio de trabajo se convierta en un caos?, ¿o te dejas llevar por el caos creativo?

Tenemos un lugar de trabajo

bastante caótico y creativo; siempre intento llegar al sí y rara vez rechazo una oportunidad.

¿Cuál es el aspecto más gratificante de tener tu propio negocio?

Ser capaz de construir algo de la nada y alimentarlo con un equipo que tú mismo has formado.

¿Cuáles son las cualidades que más valoras en un empleado?

Optimismo, creatividad y lealtad.

¿Cuál es el punto fuerte de tu empresa?

Creo que la fidelidad y la inversión de nuestros clientes es nuestra mayor fortaleza.

¿Qué desearías haber sabido antes de empezar tu negocio?

Cuántas horas semanales serían necesarias para lograrlo.

¿Qué es lo más importante que has aprendido de una falla?

Que a veces puedes hacer todo lo correcto y aún así puede salir mal.

¿Quién ha sido tu principal influencia o mentor en tu trayectoria empresarial?

Suena cursi, pero pienso en lo que creó Walt Disney, especialmente en los primeros 30 años.

¿Qué consejo darías a los emprendedores aspirantes?

Aprende todo lo que puedas de quienes te rodean.

¿Qué cambio te gustaría ver en la comunidad empresarial local?

Creo que sería mejor ver a la comunidad unirse en tiempos de necesidad antes de que las empresas fracasen y no solo celebrar sus logros. Deberíamos ser más abiertos respecto de las cosas que nos cuestan esfuerzo.

¿Qué te motiva a seguir adelante cuando hay dificultades?

Cómo hacemos sentir a la gente cuando nos visitan.

¿Cuál es tu estado de ánimo actual?

Optimista.

¿Qué hábito has adoptado y ha tenido un impacto significativo en tu negocio?

Hacer primero las cosas difíciles.

¿Cómo empiezas el día y qué es lo primero que haces al despertarte?

Escucho las noticias y me entero de lo que pasa en el mundo.

¿Cuál es la herramienta o el truco de productividad sin el cual no podrías vivir?

Slack nos ha facilitado mucho la comunicación diaria.

¿Cómo te desconectas y te relajas después de un largo día de trabajo?

Suelo ver un poco la tele antes de acostarme, aunque haya trabajado hasta tarde.

¿Con qué frecuencia revisas y ajustas los objetivos y las estrategias de tu negocio?

Seguimos un plan trienal que actualizaremos cuando se cumplan los tres años.

¿Cómo equilibras el trabajo con la vida personal?

Es muy difícil, pero intento que salgamos en familia al menos una vez a la semana, pase lo que pase.

“

En sólo dos años, Queen & Rook ha incrementado sus ingresos en un 80% y ha ampliado su personal en más de un 50%.

”

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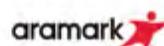
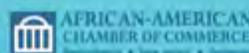
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Questions?

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B2B LATINO: BOOST YOUR BUSINESS WITH POWERFUL CONNECTIONS!



By Mayra Soto,
GPHCC Membership Engagement Coordinator

As a business owner, you are always seeking effective ways to stimulate your business growth. For this reason, the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (GPHCC) offers you the B2B Latino program. This exclusive referral exchange circle is an opportunity to connect with other entrepreneurs, build strong relationships, and open doors to new opportunities for your business.

What is B2B Latino?

“Business-to-Business” indicates collaboration among businesses. B2B Latino is a group designed specifically for GPHCC members looking to expand their network, increase sales, and improve business visibility. Through monthly virtual meetings and in-person mixers, you will connect with other business owners who share your energy and vision.

This initiative started as a pilot project with a group of 20 entrepreneurs led by Julissa

Almonte-Espinal, co-owner of Innovech Software. It quickly expanded to a second group due to enthusiasm and demand from our members. This second group, Karen Machin of Kita, Gorman & Associates, and Amaury Abreu of Kommunity, has doubled growth opportunities for our members.

The evolution continues. This fall, B2B Latino launched Espresso Speed Networking, another dynamic and creative way to make new connections that brings both groups together.

Why Join B2B Latino?

The power of connections is invaluable. B2B Latino helps you build the strong social capital that is essential for business's growth. Additionally, virtual meetings keep you at the forefront of new technologies and communication trends in the business world. This experience also makes you the best ambassador for your brand as you promote your

company through presentations among participants and one-on-one meetings.

At the same time, GPHCC leverages B2B Latino to build and promote its members' businesses. The mixers are held at member and ally restaurants and venues, adding more value to the program. Being present is crucial to promoting your business. Everyone wants to know you and learn about your venture. Your next connection awaits you at B2B Latino!

For more information, email B2BLatino@philahispanicchamber.org.



THE AMERICAN ECONOMY RELIES ON IMMIGRANT BUSINESSES: HERE'S WHY

By *Garett Fadeley*
Independent Journalist

www.2puntosplatform.com



This fall, GPHCC hosted a conversation with Dr. Zeke Hernandez about his book, *The Truth About Immigration*.

Immigrant-owned businesses are essential outlets for innovation and economic growth in the US, providing a model of resiliency and community impact that stretches beyond borders. Author and Wharton UPenn University Professor Zeke Hernandez uses the aphorism "a tide that lifts all boats" to describe how immigrants fill major gaps in the workforce, create jobs, and promote the economy.

At the core of Hernandez's model, he lists the "big five economic inputs" immigrants bring into the country: talent, consumption, investment, innovation, and taxes. Whether they come through asylum or by some other route, Hernandez emphasizes that immigrants enrich the economy in ways that align with both compassion and self-interest. "It's not just about being compassionate," he says. These people contribute significantly to the economy because they fill key jobs and, therefore, create conditions for growth.

"Some of those businesses are subsistence businesses," Hernandez says. "They are a key economic pillar, especially in developing countries, where they can help people avoid poverty. Immigrants are filling jobs that locals

don't want and are less likely to do, that is fairly universal. For example, farming and construction jobs."

The story of immigration often tips between two perspectives: the "villain" narrative, said to steal jobs from native workers, and the "victim" narrative, who should garner pity. Both of these, Hernandez suggests, are deeply flawed. "Fear is a powerful motivator," he explains, "but it's self-interest combined with compassion that really drives action. Pity alone does not mobilize a majority." Instead, he says, communicating the mutual benefits of immigration can build a more sustainable-inclusive view of immigrants' contributions.

Immigrant entrepreneurs are able to aid in growing the American economy more expeditiously when partnered with business organizations such as the GPHCC.

Immigrant Entrepreneurs

Fortaleza Rehabilitation and Fitness Centers is an example of the immigrant push. In 1994, in what many call "The Neighborhood" (El barrio), a Colombian and a Puerto Rican opened the first outpatient physical therapy and rehabilitation clinic. Over the years, they have opened two more centers, one in Kensington and the other in Fishtown.

"We have three clinics, a gym, and thirty employees. We provide

services to our community not only in physical therapy, we teach them nutrition and, of course, how to exercise," explained Luis Hincapie, clinical director/owner, who has a doctorate in physical therapy.

LUHV is another example. It is a family business owned by immigrants from Argentina that produces vegan and gluten-free foods. They opened a restaurant in Newton, PA, and customers began ordering food to enjoy at home.

In 2015, they produced the first hand-produced vegan products, and in 2016, due to demand, they opened a new facility in Hatboro, PA. In 2021, they opened a 6,000-square-foot factory that allowed them to expand production fifty-fold and opened two new locations.

"We support 'Support and Feed,' 'Clean air 1st' and 'Reusable to go' in Philadelphia. And, we maintain a community and pantry out of our location for food insecurity in South Philadelphia," said Silvia Lucci, owner.

Both entrepreneurs believe their businesses provide not just much-needed jobs but also a vital boost to the local economy because they draw investment into their communities and spur growth in the Point Breeze, Center City, and Juniata neighborhoods.

~continued on p. 31

LA ECONOMÍA ESTADOUNIDENSE DEPENDE DE LAS EMPRESAS DE INMIGRANTES: ESTA ES LA RAZÓN

Por Garrett Fadeley
Periodista independiente, 2PuntosPlatform

Este otoño, la GPHCC organizó una conversación con el Dr. Zeke Hernandez sobre su libro *La Verdad Sobre La Inmigración*

Las empresas propiedad de inmigrantes son canales esenciales para la innovación y el crecimiento económico en Estados Unidos, además de ofrecer un modelo de resiliencia e impacto comunitario que se extiende más allá de las fronteras. El autor y profesor de Wharton (Universidad de Penn) Zeke Hernandez, utiliza el aforismo "una marea que levanta todos los barcos" para describir cómo los inmigrantes llenan los vacíos en la fuerza laboral, crean empleo y promueven la economía.

En el núcleo de su modelo, Hernandez enumera los "cinco grandes insumos económicos" que los inmigrantes traen al país: talento, consumo, inversión, innovación e impuestos. Ya sea que lleguen como asilados o por alguna otra vía, Hernandez enfatiza que los inmigrantes enriquecen la economía de maneras que se alinean tanto con la compasión como con el interés propio. "No se trata solo de ser compasivo", dice, son personas que contribuyen en gran medida a la economía porque ocupan puestos clave y, por lo tanto, crean condiciones para el crecimiento.

"Algunas de esas empresas son empresas de subsistencia", dice Hernandez. "Son un pilar económico clave, especialmente en los países en desarrollo, donde pueden ayudar a las personas a evitar la pobreza.

Es bastante común que los inmigrantes ocupen puestos de trabajo que los locales no quieren o que es menos probable que ocupen. Por ejemplo, los empleos agrícolas y de la construcción."

La historia de la inmigración a menudo se inclina entre dos perspectivas: la narrativa del "villano", que supuestamente roba puestos de trabajo a los trabajadores nativos, y la de la "víctima", que debería generar compasión. Ambas, sugiere Hernandez, son profundamente erróneas. "El miedo es un motivador poderoso", explica, "pero es el interés propio combinado con la compasión lo que realmente impulsa a la acción. La compasión por sí sola no moviliza a una mayoría". En cambio, dice, comunicar los beneficios mutuos de la inmigración puede generar una visión más sostenible e inclusiva de las contribuciones de los inmigrantes.

Los empresarios inmigrantes pueden ayudar a que la economía estadounidense crezca más rápidamente cuando se asocian con organizaciones empresariales como la Cámara de Comercio Hispana.

Emprendedores inmigrantes en la ciudad

El centro de rehabilitación La Fortaleza es un ejemplo de la iniciativa inmigrante. En 1994, en lo que muchos llaman "El Barrio", un colombiano y un puertorriqueño abrieron la primera clínica ambulatoria de fisioterapia y rehabilitación. Con el paso de los años, han abierto dos centros más, uno en Kensington y otro en Fishtown.

"Contamos con tres clínicas, un gimnasio y 30 empleados. Brindamos servicios a nuestra comunidad no solo en fisioterapia, les enseñamos nutrición y, por supuesto, cómo hacer ejercicio", explica Luis Hincapié, director clínico y propietario, quien tiene un doctorado en Fisioterapia.

LUHV es otro ejemplo. Es una empresa familiar propiedad de inmigrantes de Argentina que produce alimentos veganos y sin gluten. Abrieron un restaurante en Newtown, Pensilvania, y los clientes comenzaron a pedir comida para disfrutar en casa.

En 2015 realizaron sus primeros productos veganos elaborados a mano y en 2016, debido a la demanda, abrieron una nueva planta en Hatboro, Pensilvania. En 2021 abrieron una fábrica de 6,000 pies cuadrados, que les permitió ampliar la producción cincuenta veces, y dos nuevas ubicaciones.

"Apoyamos las iniciativas Support and Feed, Clean Air 1st y Reusable to Go en Filadelfia. Y mantenemos una comunidad y una despensa para combatir la inseguridad alimentaria en el sur de Filadelfia", cuenta Silvia Lucci, propietaria.

Ambos empresarios creen que sus negocios brindan no solo empleos muy necesarios, sino también un impulso vital para la economía local, porque ambos atraen inversiones a sus comunidades y estimulan el crecimiento en los vecindarios de Point Breeze, Center City y Juniata.

~continued on p. 31



AREPA GRUB SPOT:

A VENEZUELAN LEGACY THRIVING IN PHILADELPHIA'S CULINARY SCENE

@arepagrubspot

By Maria Cristina Rios-Bueno, Deputy Editor

Can you tell us a little about your story and where you are from?

My name is Julio César Rivas. I'm from Caracas, Venezuela, and I currently live in Northeast Philadelphia. In 2017, amid a severe political crisis in my country, I was forced to leave behind a life dedicated to defending civil rights as a legislator. The persecution from the dictatorship made me send my family to the United States for their safety. After a period in hiding, I managed to go into exile as well. Since then, I've worked to rebuild my life here, combining my passion for culture and gastronomy.

What inspired you to open your restaurant, and how has your cultural heritage influenced your cooking?

When I realized I had to start over in a foreign country, I understood that my career as a politician wouldn't be immediately applicable. So, I decided to learn a new trade and found that gastronomy was a way

to stay connected to my roots and my community. I studied at the Metropolitan University in Caracas in a program called Gastronomic Humanism, taught by renowned Venezuelan chef Armando Scanone. This approach not only trained me in technique but also gave me a deep understanding of the historical and cultural context of every traditional Venezuelan dish.

The idea of opening Arepa Grub Spot came from the desire to share our culture and history through food and to bring authentic flavors to Philadelphia that evoke the warmth of a Latin home. My mom, Nubia Castillo, has been a key part of this project. Not only did we bring the flavors of our childhood to the menu, but her partnership and energy have been essential in bringing this place to life.

What has been the most rewarding part of owning and running your restaurant?

Seeing how our culture finds its place in the community has been incredibly rewarding. Being in such a competitive area like 9th Street in the Italian Market and having our food recognized and appreciated is a great achievement. We are very proud to have been recognized in The Best of Philly by *Philly Mag* in 2023 and to be included in RestaurantJI's 2024 recommended restaurants list. These recognitions validate our effort and inspire us to keep leaving a mark on Philadelphia's culinary scene and continue being a place where Latin food is celebrated and feels like home.

Additionally, seeing how people connect with our roots through food is something that goes beyond business; it's a cultural impact that fills me with pride.

How has GPHCC's Dine Latino Restaurant Week impacted your business and customer base?

Dine Latino has been a key platform for us. Arepas aren't as well-known as other popular dishes like tacos or pizza, and as a small business, we face the challenge of getting our name out there without the marketing resources that big restaurants have. Dine Latino has eased that burden, helping us reach more people and present our culinary culture on a bigger stage. It has allowed us to attract new customers who are curious about discovering our cuisine and has made us feel truly part of this city.

What advice would you give to Latino entrepreneurs aspiring to open their own restaurants?

The restaurant world is a path of patience and perseverance. The bureaucratic processes, licenses, and permits can all take longer than expected. My advice is to prepare for a marathon, not a sprint. Get good advice, be willing to wait, and don't lose sight of your vision, because if you persist, the effort will be worth it.

Photography courtesy of Julio Cesar Rivas

AREPA GRUB SPOT: UN LEGADO VENEZOLANO QUE FLORECE EN LA ESCENA GASTRONÓMICA DE FILADELFIA

La iniciativa Dine Latino promueve a los restaurantes de propiedad latina alentando a los clientes a descubrir experiencias culinarias en la región de Filadelfia. Arepa Grub Spot, un restaurante venezolano conocido por sus sabores auténticos, participó ofreciendo un toque único de la cultura latina a través de sus platos tradicionales.

¿Nos puedes contar un poco sobre tu historia y de dónde eres?

Mi nombre es Julio César Rivas, soy de Caracas, Venezuela, y actualmente resido en el noreste de Filadelfia. En 2017, en medio de una grave crisis política en mi país, me vi forzado a dejar atrás una vida dedicada a la defensa de los derechos civiles como legislador. La persecución de la dictadura me obligó a enviar a mi familia a los Estados Unidos por protección, y después de un periodo en la clandestinidad, logré exiliarme también. Desde entonces, he trabajado por reconstruir una vida aquí, combinando mi pasión por la cultura y la gastronomía.

¿Qué te inspiró a abrir un restaurante y cómo ha influido tu herencia cultural en su cocina?

Cuando supe que tendría que empezar de nuevo en un país extranjero, entendí que mi carrera como político no sería inmediatamente aplicable. Así que decidí aprender un nuevo oficio y encontré en la gastronomía una vía para conectarme con mis raíces y mi comunidad. Estudié en la Universidad Metropolitana de Caracas, en un programa llamado Humanismo Gastronómico, impartido por el reconocido chef venezolano Armando Scanone. Este enfoque no solo me formó en la técnica, sino que me permitió entender profundamente el contexto histórico y

cultural de cada plato tradicional de Venezuela.

La idea de abrir Arepa Grub Spot nació de ese deseo: compartir nuestra cultura e historia a través de la comida, y traer a Filadelfia sabores auténticos que evocan la calidez de una casa latina. Mi mamá, Nubia Castillo, ha sido una pieza clave en este proyecto, no solo porque trajimos los sabores de nuestra niñez al menú, sino porque su participación como socia y su energía han sido esenciales para darle vida a este lugar.

¿Cuál ha sido la parte más gratificante de ser dueño y administrar tu restaurante?

Ver cómo nuestra cultura se abre espacio en la comunidad ha sido increíblemente gratificante. Estar en un lugar tan competitivo como la Calle 9 del Mercado Italiano y lograr que nuestra comida sea reconocida y apreciada es un gran logro. Nos sentimos muy orgullosos de que Philadelphia Magazine nos reconociera en *The Best of Philly* en 2023

“

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”

y de aparecer en la lista de 2024 de restaurantes recomendados de Restaurantji. Estos reconocimientos no solo validan nuestro esfuerzo, sino que nos inspiran a seguir dejando huellas en la gastronomía de Filadelfia y a continuar siendo un espacio donde la comida latina se celebre y se sienta como en casa.

Además, ver cómo la gente se conecta con nuestras raíces a través de la comida es algo que va más allá del negocio; es un impacto cultural que me llena de orgullo.

¿Cómo ha impactado la Dine Latino Restaurant Week de GPHCC en tu negocio y base de clientes?

Dine Latino ha sido una plataforma clave para nosotros. La arepa no es tan conocida como otros platos populares como el taco o la pizza, y siendo un negocio pequeño enfrentamos el desafío de darnos a conocer sin los recursos de marketing que tienen los grandes restaurantes. Dine Latino ha aliviado esa carga, ayudándonos a llegar a más personas y a presentar nuestra cultura gastronómica en un escenario más amplio. Nos ha permitido atraer nuevos clientes, curiosos por descubrir nuestra cocina, y sentirnos realmente parte de esta ciudad.

¿Qué consejo les darías a los emprendedores latinos que aspiran a abrir su propio restaurante?

El mundo de los restaurantes es un camino de paciencia y perseverancia. Los trámites burocráticos, las licencias y permisos, todo puede tomar más tiempo del que uno espera. Mi consejo es que se preparen para una carrera de resistencia, no de velocidad. Asesórense bien, estén dispuestos a esperar y no pierdan de vista su visión, porque si persisten, el esfuerzo valdrá la pena.

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RECIPE: AREPAS REINA PEPIADA

Ingredients (for 4 people)

For the arepas:

2 cups of precooked corn flour (suggested brand: P.A.N. Flour).
2 ½ cups of warm water
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vegetable oil or butter (optional)

For the filling (Reina Pepiada):

2 chicken breasts (cooked and shredded)
1 large avocado (ripe)
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 garlic clove (optional, finely chopped)
½ medium onion (finely diced)
Juice of 1 lemon (to prevent the avocado from oxidizing)
Salt and pepper to taste
Chopped fresh cilantro (optional)

Preparation of the arepas:

- 1. Mix the dry ingredients:** In a large bowl, add 2 cups of pre-cooked corn flour and salt.
- 2. Add the water:** Slowly pour in 2 ½ cups of warm water while mixing with your hands or a wooden spoon. Be sure to avoid lumps. The dough should be smooth and homogeneous, not sticky.
- 3. Rest the dough:** Let the dough rest for about 5 minutes so the flour absorbs the water well.
- 4. Forming the arepas:** Take a portion of the dough and form a ball the size of a golf ball. Then gently flatten it until it is round and about 1-2 cm thick.
- 5. Cook the arepas:** Preheat a large skillet or griddle over medium heat and lightly grease it with oil or butter. Place the arepas and cook them for 5-7 minutes on each side

until they form a golden crust. Then, you can finish cooking them in the preheated oven at 350°F (180°C) for about 10 minutes to make sure they are fully cooked.

Preparation of the filling (Reina Pepiada):

- 1. Cook the chicken:** Cook the chicken breasts in salted water until tender, about 15-20 minutes. Then, remove and shred the chicken with a fork.
- 2. Prepare the avocado:** Peel and mash the avocado in a bowl with a fork. Add the lime juice to prevent oxidation.
- 3. Sauté the onion:** In a skillet, add a little oil and sauté the onion squares for 3-4 minutes over medium heat until translucent and lightly browned. This will give a softer and sweeter touch to the onion in the filling. If you prefer, you can add the raw onion directly to give it a crunchier and stronger touch.
- 4. Mix the filling:** In a large bowl, combine the shredded chicken with the avocado, mayonnaise, minced garlic (optional), onion (sautéed or raw, depending on your preference), salt and pepper to taste. Mix well until all ingredients are integrated.
- 5. Add cilantro (optional):** If you like cilantro, add it finely chopped to give it a fruity touch.

Assembling the arepas:

- 1. Open the arepas:** With a knife, open the arepas lengthwise, creating a pocket.
- 2. Filling:** Fill each arepa generously with the Reina Pepiada mixture.

Tips:

Stir-fried onion will give the filling a milder, sweeter flavor, while raw onion will give it a crispier, fresher touch. You can choose the one you prefer according to your taste.

Adjust the amount of mayonnaise and avocado if you want a creamier or lighter mixture.

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Realtor at Keller Williams Realty
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askjuanvalencia.kw.com

Realtor at KW Tri-County
215-278-3152
claudiaandrade.kw.com

Road to Keys
484-664-9035
roadtokeys.com

Royal Wealth Investments
610-202-0657
royalwealthinvestments.com

Stead Holdings
215-896-5986

The ZoeyGrace Corporation
484-655-7635

Voyage Investments
917-374-5570
voyage-investments.com

RESTAURANTS

Alma Del Mar
215-644-8158
almadelmar.net

Angelino's Restaurant
215-787-9945
angelinosfairmount.com

Arepa Grub Spot
445-776-2079
arepagrubspot.com

Boca Del Mar
484-355-5188
labocadelmar.com

El Merkury
267-254-5952
elmerkury.com

El Rinconcito Guatemalteco
484-213-6578

El Sarape Blue Bell
610-239-9466
elsarapebluebell.com

Ess Bakery Café
484-674-7408
essbakeryandcafe.com

Fiesta Churros
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fiestachurros.com

Geronimo's
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geronimosambler.com

Happy Maki
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happymaki.com

Izlas Latin Cuisine
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izlaslatin.com

Jicome
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La Llamita Vegana
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lallamitavegana.com

Las Fridas Mexican Kitchen
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lasfridasmexicankitchen.com

Mamajuana Cafe Philly
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Mamajuanacafephilly.com

Mias Bistro
814-343-0877

Plaza Garibaldi
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plazagaribalditogo.com

Taqueria Morales
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taqueriamorales.com

Tierra Colombiana
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tierracolombianarestaurant.com

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amazon.com

Chio Organic
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chioorganicshaircare.com

Dynamic Advertising Solutions
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getdas.com

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adedenshampoo

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formanspawn.com

HappySimo Inc.
267-241-7922
happysimo.com

IKEA Philadelphia
215-551-4215
ikea.com

Latin Fashion
215-329-0352
latinfashionusa.com

Pepper Lee Boutique
484-574-8046
pepperleeboutique.com

Philadelphia Laser
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laserphilly.com

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267-245-5302
yakuwear.com

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Bonita Beauty
609-206-1781

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~continued from p. 9 (Vivian Isaak)

my email on my phone and do 20 minutes of Pilates before sitting at my desk.

What's your go-to productivity hack or tool that you can't live without?

My go-to productivity hack is time-blocking. It helps me organize

my day and stay focused on tasks.

How do you unwind and relax after a long day of work?

I have a date with my massage chair and listen to audiobooks.

How often do you review and adjust your business goals and strategies?

I have a five-year business plan assessed yearly with quarterly reviews to adjust.

How do you balance work and personal life?

Maintaining a work-life balance is a constant challenge for me, as the scale often tips in favor of work.

~continued from p. 19 (The American Economy)

Obstacles Overcome

Yet despite all the positives, immigrant entrepreneurs continue to face barriers in accessing capital and networking opportunities. Hernandez says this often makes immigrants more "scrappy" and resourceful, given their meager resources.

"On average, it's easier for a native-born entrepreneur to raise capital," he says. "Immigrants have to be creative because they just don't have those kinds of resources."

It's this kind of ingenuity that uniquely characterizes immigrant entrepreneurs and greases the wheels of their success.

"They don't have a fallback," Hernandez says. "It has to work."

The motivation and such creativity fuel not only their personal gains but are also highly contributory to the larger economy, of which immigrant businesses often outperform natives in job creation and innovation.

A Call for Policy Change

Perhaps the most imaginative of his proposals is to move immigration enforcement out from underneath the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and into the Department of Commerce.

"It's outrageous to put immigration in DHS's hands because it implies

that immigrants are some kind of threat," he says. "We should be focused on how immigrants help build economic security through innovation and job creation."

According to Hernandez, if immigration is framed more as a national economic issue than as one of national security, it will better reflect the real worth of immigrant contributions to the American economy. Immigrant businesses fill gaps that native-born entrepreneurs are sometimes unwilling or unable to fill; therefore, they only act as catalysts for growth and opportunities for both natives and newcomers alike.

"Compassion," he says, "aligns with self-interest."

~continua de p. 20 (La Economía Estadounidense)

Obstáculos superados

Sin embargo, a pesar de todos los aspectos positivos, los empresarios inmigrantes siguen enfrentando barreras para acceder a capital y a las oportunidades para generar contactos. Hernandez dice que esto a menudo hace que los inmigrantes sean más luchadores e ingeniosos, dados sus escasos recursos.

"En promedio, es más fácil para un empresario nativo conseguir capital", dice. "Los inmigrantes tienen que ser creativos, porque simplemente no tienen ese tipo de recursos." Este tipo de ingenio caracteriza de manera única a los empresarios inmigrantes y engrasa las ruedas de su éxito.

"No tienen recursos de reserva", dice Hernandez, "así que tiene que funcionar".

La motivación y esa creatividad no solo alimentan sus ganancias personales, sino que también contribuyen en gran medida a la economía en general, en la que las empresas inmigrantes a menudo superan a las nativas en creación de empleo e innovación.

Un llamado al cambio de políticas

Hernandez tiene una propuesta diferente: trasladar la aplicación de la ley de inmigración del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional (DHS, por su sigla en inglés) al Departamento de Comercio.

"Es indignante poner la inmigración en manos del DHS, porque implica que los inmigrantes son algún tipo de amenaza", dice. "Deberíamos centrarnos en la

manera en que los inmigrantes ayudan a construir la seguridad económica a través de la innovación y la creación de empleo."

Según Hernandez, si la inmigración se enmarca a nivel nacional más como un asunto económico que como uno de seguridad, reflejará mejor el valor real de las contribuciones de los inmigrantes a la economía estadounidense. Las empresas de inmigrantes llenan vacíos que los empresarios nativos a veces no están dispuestos a llenar o no pueden hacerlo; por lo tanto, solo actúan como catalizadores para el crecimiento y las oportunidades, tanto para los nativos como para los recién llegados.

"La compasión", dice, "se alinea con el interés propio".

MEMBERS IN FOCUS

2024 Closing the Gap

The 2024 Closing the Gap Conference brought together small business owners eager to embrace technology. Expert speakers shared valuable insights on AI, the use of customer data for business strategies, and strategic growth. Thanks to the Community College of Philadelphia, the Widener University Small Business Development Center and Verizon, the conference empowered entrepreneurs to revolutionize their businesses with technology.



B2B Latino Mixers

The B2B Latino business referral groups came together over the summer at Queen & Rook Game Cafe and in September Live! Casino & Hotel Philadelphia. Entrepreneurs shared and were celebrated for their achievements, and new connections sparked exciting opportunities!



Elevate Together® In Store Event

The Elevate Together® grant award ceremony, hosted at Office Depot in September, celebrated minority-owned small businesses who received grants critical for the growth of their business. In partnership with the ODP Corporation, the National Urban League and the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, GPHCC was happy to provide grants to 10 recipients this fall! The grant empowers recipients with resources to enhance business growth and community impact.



Dine Latino Events

Dine Latino summer events brought members together for a culinary celebration! Jezabel's owner Chef Jezabel Careaga, packed the house with her divine meal and a second gathering at Mural City Cellars celebrated the winery's new location and Board Member Victor Garrido's being named to America's Top 200 CPAs Forbes.



MEMBER UPDATES

Cultured Enuf has hired its first full-time employee in Philadelphia, Taylor Stokes, MS. This significant step enhances their ability to help leaders build organizational cultures that align with their values. (Accelerate Graduate 2023)

Rosales Communications used GPHCC's Elevate Together grant to build a beautiful studio to record new content and host events while increasing storage capacity for new clients. (Accelerate Graduate 2019)

The Faiya Company created a manufacturing side to the business that has been a lot more successful than anticipated, and they are excited to work with many

local restaurants in producing their sauces. (Accelerate Graduate 2021)

Kommunity launched its beta web app, gaining over 70 users in the first month. Supported by GPHCC's Elevate Together Grant and initial investor commitment, they are raising \$500k in a pre-seed round. Investors can join with as little as \$2,000 for equity. Interested parties can reach out to amaury@kommunity.app. (Accelerate Graduate 2023)

Damaso Painting is proud to announce they have been admitted to Philadelphia Gas Works' Diverse Business Development Program. (Accelerate Graduate 2024; Build Latino Graduate 2023)



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La diversidad, la equidad y la inclusión son nuestras bases para la innovación e impulsan nuestro negocio.

They also inspire a deep connection to the Latino community, and to all the communities we serve.

Comcast NBCUniversal is proud to support the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and its Excelencia in Hispanic Business event.

