



GUEST POST: Elevating Latinx Culture in the Greater Canby Community

September 23, 2022

By Puentes Entre Culturas (Bridging Cultures) |

[Haga clic aquí para leer este artículo en español](#)

In celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month, ClackCoKids would like to highlight a special organization serving our Canby/Barlow community with culturally-specific programming and services that we have been partnering with over the summer of 2022.

In 2000, a small group of people began making sack lunches and passing them out on Saturdays to neighbors living in the apartment buildings on Cedar Street and Locust Street in Canby. We later began delivering backpacks with school supplies, pumpkins, flowers and produce from the garden as well as Christmas Trees during the holidays. Several members from the neighborhood reciprocated by hosting a holiday dinner, and we

all made plans for a community barbeque in the spring. Through these collaborations over the last 20 years, our organization has grown to support and enrich our community by serving thousands of meals, hosting culturally specific celebrations, and providing access to resources that bring equity.

We organized as a non-profit in 2010 with the name Bridging Cultures (Puentes Entre Culturas). Our mission is “To build relationships that create an equitable community”. We host community celebrations that are fun, respectful, rich opportunities for our community to engage in cultural exchange and learning. We believe an important part of building resilience is creating a community that is truly connected, and the best way to do that is to celebrate each other in a way that feels safe and welcomes everyone.

We recently wrapped up our annual summer series of events called Saturdays in the Park that started from that first Spring Barbeque. Twice a month, we would bring the community together to build friendships and encourage people to get to know one another over food, entertainment, activities and fun. We provided connections to community resources as well. Our community partners provided resources and services to families in one convenient location in an event that is exciting, family-focused, and culturally specific.

These events are intended to be a reciprocal cultural exchange. We bring people together in a way that creates a comfortable, joyful space to learn about each other, and celebrate the Latinx culture through shared experiences. The food we serve changes – sometimes its American BBQ, sometimes its food from the diverse Latinx culture. We believe it is very important for the Latinx youth to see their culture being elevated, appreciated, honored and celebrated. The events also have a strong focus on connecting traditionally underserved populations with resources.



The Danza Azteca group at a Saturdays in the Park event.

We have many other programs and projects going on in our community to empower people, and create connection, including:

- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for beginner and Intermediate levels in a partnership with Clackamas Community College.
- Protection of Oregon Farmworkers program – we go out to local farms and distribute information about the COVID vaccine including helping access clinics, provide information about local wrap around services, distribute PPE, COVID tests, and more in collaboration with OHA and Clackamas County.
- Community garden at Baker Prairie Middle School – we have 12 plots that are used to plant culturally specific foods including tomatillos, peppers, hierba buena and cilantro.
- STEAM – our two-week summer program aims to diversify STEAM programs; focusing on Latinx youth from 5th grade – 7th. We partner with the Canby School District, Canby Education Foundation and the Ford Family Foundation.
- Climate Disaster Resilience and Wellness – building community connectedness that brings resilience in the face of climate disasters that disproportionately impact the rural Latinx and Farmworking communities. Focusing on latinx women, our course

addresses stress, anxiety and identity driven community care in the face of disaster to boost community resilience.

- Disaster Preparedness and Response- In this evolving program we aim to find better ways to improve community preparedness and response to environmental/climate emergencies our community has recently faced, including – ice storms, heat waves, and wildfires.

In all of our programs and services, we strive to focus on promoting leadership, advocacy, wellness, community, and equity within our community. We aim to learn, grow, and improve our practices every day to meet this goal.

Our next community-wide event will be our annual multicultural dinner on November 19th from 5pm to 7pm at Baker Prairie Middle School. The event is free and for all ages. Please join us as we celebrate community with an evening of multicultural food, entertainment and lots of fun!

If you would like to learn more about our programs, services, or connect with us, please visit our website at www.bridgingculturescanby.org.

ClackCoKids occasionally offers our blog as a space for our partners to share information, resources, and insight to the community at large. Thoughts and opinions expressed in the blog are those of the blog author, and do not necessarily reflect the values of ClackCoKids.