Latino Commission on AIDS recognizes the State of South Carolina in Responding to the needs of Hispanic impacted by HIV/AIDS

April 22, 2010. Over 70 participants from across the state of South Carolina met in North Charleston, South Carolina to address HIV/AIDS within the Hispanic community. Lowcountry AIDS Services in collaboration with the Medical University of South Carolina, College of Nursing, Hispanic Healthcare Initiative hosted the 2nd Annual South Carolina Hispanic Roundtable on HIV/AIDS on April 9th, 2010. Health officials, researchers, elected officials, faith-based and community service providers met to identify strategies, resources, tools and develop pro-active action plans to serve the growing Hispanic community in South Carolina.

Lowcountry AIDS Services, HIV Prevention Coordinator, Mark Gray, noted, “This year we saw a 39% increase in the number of Hispanic participants from last year. This positive trend indicates the continued involvement of the Hispanic community in addressing health disparities.”

The Latinos in the Deep South Project of the Latino Commission on AIDS was started three years ago with support from the Ford Foundation. According to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, Hispanics comprise 3% of the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS and account for 6% of all new HIV infections in 2007-2008. In the Southern U.S., local infrastructure, stigma, discrimination and immigration issues complicate community efforts to respond to HIV/AIDS.

Attendees at the round table discussed and designed collaborative action plans to tackle HIV/AIDS. Since the meeting was held, participants have been proactive in their efforts. Representatives from faith-based organizations are identifying grant opportunities to build health ministries. Various community-based organizations are promoting the “Tienda Initiative.” The initiative focuses on conducting health screening within stores that are frequented by Hispanics. Five stores in the community have already agreed to participate in the initiative.

“Rather than focusing on just the barriers that the Hispanic community faces, participants came together to dialogue about actual solutions. I witnessed the progressive efforts of those who attended to network and build coalitions to inform the community about HIV/AIDS as a health disparity,” stated Christian F. Castro, Director of Latinos in the Deep South, a regional program of the Latino Commission on AIDS.

Lowcountry AIDS Services and other partners are planning to host the 3rd Annual South Carolina Hispanic Roundtable in April 2011. These future meetings will continue to sustain partnerships and projects that focus on the impact of HIV/AIDS and other health concerns in Hispanic communities across the State.

ABOUT THE LATINO COMMISSION ON AIDS
The Latino Commission on AIDS (Commission) is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1990 dedicated to fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Latino/Hispanic communities. The Commission is the leading national Latino AIDS organization coordinating National Latino AIDS Awareness Day and other prevention and advocacy programs across the United States and its territories. For more information visit: www.latinoaids.org or www.nlaad.org.

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