

Debra Bueno, Latina Advocate

Her Legacy: Celebrating and improving the lives of Hispanic youth and the larger Hispanic community

Recently retired as director of the Northside Aztlan Community Center, where she worked for 35 years, Debra Bueno was inducted into the Colorado Hispanic Hall of Fame as the 2018 Unsung Hero. Debra, a Fort Collins native, grew up in the Tres Colonias area of north Fort Collins and still lives in one of the colonies, Andersonville.

As director of the community center she created several programs to engage youth such as summer basketball, but she knew that sometimes, young people just need someone to talk to, and she made herself available to them. “You can’t hear a text,” she has commented, “but you sure can hear their passion or disappointment or joy in a two-minute conversation.”

Her mission was to empower young people and teach them to take on leadership roles. Inspired by her father, J. Victor Bueno Sr., who was a strong local advocate for the Hispanic community in Fort Collins, she devoted her life to speak out on behalf of her community and encourage others to let their voices be heard.

For several years Debra was the board chair of the spring Cinco de Mayo festival in Fort Collins, an annual celebration of Latino heritage and culture.

Rich Salas, a former participant at the center who was mentored by Debra, said of her that she has long been a powerful voice for the most vulnerable among us. He credits her for his success in academia.

“My saying... was, ‘Once you walk through my door, no matter who you are, you are a Northside kid. My mission was to make Northside kids impact the world. And that has happened time and time again.”

Written by Barbara Fleming, Author, Coloradoan Columnist and Living Her Legacy Wordsmith