



# West Valley VIEW

The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ  
Phone (623) 535-8439

Tuesday, September 16, 2008

## Mexican Independence Day ushers in Hispanic Heritage Month *EMCC holding free events*

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Estrella Mountain Community College is honoring Hispanic culture with a slate of free events in September and October. The college, at 3000 N. Dysart Road in Avondale, will fire up its annual celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month today, Mexican Independence Day.

College president Ernie Lara and Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers will welcome students, faculty, staff and community members to the month-long celebration at an 11 a.m. opening ceremony in Ceremonial Plaza. Between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., a screening of *A History of Hispanic Achievement in America* will run in Plaza Gallery.

The latest available statistics show that as of the fall 2007 semester, 32 percent of the college's student population was Hispanic. Acknowledging cultural events such as Hispanic Heritage Month enables the college to expose its students to a broader range of learning opportunities, said Maria Reyes, a chairwoman on the Hispanic Heritage Month committee.

"The significance to the college is to bring educational opportunities to our students and our community," Reyes said. "By recognizing diversity, we offer students an opportunity to learn about different cultures and countries."

The theme of this year's festivities is "Usando Nuestra Voz," or "Using Our Voice."

"It was created to coincide with the political campaign," said Carissa Pool, a college spokeswoman. "Using your voice in civic engagement and getting involved in the community."

That theme will be explored tonight with a reception and art walk between 5 and 7 p.m. in Plaza Gallery. Following a keynote speech by Delia Torres of the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation, attendees will view *Soy Americano: Contemporary Chicana/o Political and Civic Art*, an exhibition stressing involvement in civic and political issues.

The emphasis on community participation will continue Saturday with a seminar for both students and local teachers. From 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Plaza Gallery, the Cesar E. Chavez Foundation will sponsor an "Educating the Heart" program that will demonstrate how community service and academic study can be combined. Several students will participate in a teacher training activity, while teachers will walk away with resource guides and supplemental materials.

Most of the events scheduled for Hispanic Heritage Month have not yet been determined or released to the public. The college hopes to announce additional September and October activities, including a speaker series, in the near future.

For information, visit the college's Web site, [www.estrellamountain.edu](http://www.estrellamountain.edu), or call 623-935-8583.

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