

Honoring Hispanic Heritage Month

Written by By Bernie Dotson
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As you read this, the nation celebrates Hispanics and their contributions to the United States during National Hispanic Heritage Month. The recognition runs from Sept. 15 through Oct. 15.

The celebration began in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week, under then-President Lyndon B. Johnson, and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period beginning Sept. 15. Those 30 days are especially important for Gallup and McKinley County, as the city and its surrounding confines have significant Hispanic populations.

Hispanics celebrate the 30-day interval, but who celebrates with them? Who among us joins in and recognizes the tremendous value of America's — and New Mexico's — Hispanic population? There were generations of Mexicans who came to this area long ago to work in the coalmines, among other industries, and that culture continues to permeate the city today.

The proclamation itself is an act of recognition, an invitation of sorts for everyone to join in on the celebration. But it seems that the month should be advertised a bit more. With Gallup being a place where Hispanics have figured prominently in the city's founding, we could only find one locale in town that publicly acted in recognition of the month, and that was Octavia Fellin Public Library and the various events it holds in the heritage month's honor.

The library recently held the Miss Latina showcase; holds *Somos un Pueblo Unido Of Gallup* on Oct. 11; screens episodes of *Latino Americans: 500 Years of History* on Oct. 8 and 15; and with Miyamura High School, hosts the Dia de los Muertos Sugar Skulls Workshop on Oct. 13.

We imagine high schools like Miyamura and Gallup are conducting their share of events, too, so that students, teachers, and administrators can share in the month's recognition. Still, locally, the month ought to be advertised and promoted even more.

Hispanic Heritage Month spans two months for inclusiveness. Sept. 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of the independence of many Latin American countries, including Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

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Let's all join in on the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month in Gallup.

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