

The oldest Latino  
non profit  
organization in  
New Haven.

# Junta for Progressive Action

## Junta 2003 Facts and Figures

- 650 students attended Junta's Adult Education classes (GED, ESL, Computer, Adult Literacy.)
- 38 neighborhood youth between the ages of 9 and 13 attended Summer Camp, known as "Junta at Big Turtle Village".
- 40 children between the ages of 6 and 12 enrolled in "The Neighborhood Place", Junta's Afterschool Program.
- 143 individuals were served at Junta's Legal Clinic.
- Junta provided families in need with 14,312 bags of food.

**Altogether, we  
served approximately  
4,000 clients.**



## Newsletter

Spring 2004

### The Director's Spring Letter By Kica Matos.

Dear Friends:

Just recently, I spent time with a young man, an undergraduate student who had been given an assignment by a journalism professor: to write a story about Fair Haven. The questions he asked and the comments he made were cause for consternation. Puerto Ricans, he'd been told, were lazy and overly reliant on the system. Did I believe that was the reason that so many had moved to the United States? If life was so difficult for immigrants in this country, particularly undocumented immigrants, why didn't they just go back to their home countries? Why was Fair Haven filled with crime? Was it true that the different ethnic groups in Fair Haven hated each other? The young man also talked about some of the things he had seen in the neighborhood, including a "shiny new BMW" - which, he candidly stated, **must** have belonged to a drug dealer.

My first instinct was

to throw this guy out of my office. Instead, I took a deep breath and tried to answer his questions and respond to his comments as best as I could. After our meeting, and upon further reflection, it occurred to me that he was operating from the same stereotypes and assumptions about Fair Haven and Latinos that exist among some sectors of New Haven society. He was just more candid in the presence of a Latina. The picture of Fair Haven that I spoke to this young man about was very different from the one he came with. There is no question that Fair Haven suffers from many of the consequences that poverty, discrimination and government neglect have on urban communities around the country. But there are also stories of resilience, courage and tenacity. Of hardworking families doing the superhuman to get

ahead in life and live the American dream, despite overwhelming barriers.

I am inspired to be at Junta because of the clients with whom we interact on a daily basis. The exploited undocumented person who decides to challenge a discriminatory practice in the workplace despite the dangers of deportation, harassment and the loss of employment. The immigrants who come to Junta in the evenings to learn how to speak English, or to learn about Computers. The young adults who return to the classroom after dropping out to take GED classes in order to expand their opportunities.

This community has many wonderful things to offer. Culture, a sense of community, an unparalleled level of vibrancy. A continuing quest by many to make Fair Haven cleaner, safer, more cohesive. Camaraderie and coexistence between different ethnic groups. That, to me, is the real Fair Haven.

## Save the date. Junta's Annual Fundraising Event is coming!

On **Thursday June 17, 2004**

Junta will celebrate its 35th Anniversary by holding a fundraising event at the New Haven Colony Historical Society.

It was in the late fifties that a group of pioneers got together to find a way to address the needs of first generation Puerto Ricans emigrating to the United States, and as a result, Junta was created. Today we are proud to serve

families and individuals from all backgrounds and origins while keeping true to our mission - providing services, programs and advocacy that improve the social, political and economic conditions of the Latino community in Greater New Haven, while nurturing and promoting its cultural traditions as it builds bridges with other communities.

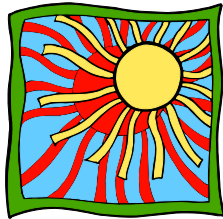
The Annual Fundraising Event is a cause for celebration, and a

time when friends, donors and supporters come together to enjoy an evening of live music, Latin food and our famous mojitos. So please save the date!

For more information about Junta's Annual Event, to volunteer, place an add in our program book, make a donation for the live auction or become a Corporate Sponsor, please contact Marga Varea at [marga.varea@juntainc.org](mailto:marga.varea@juntainc.org).

## In the works: Economic Development Program

Latinos continue to face financial impediments and socioeconomic hardships that are the direct result of a legacy and continuing practice of institutional racism. While Latinos currently constitute 15% of the U.S. population and have more than \$630B in purchasing power, there continue to be severe shortages in services and access to capital to this growing population. Over the last several years, there has been a growing recognition of a need for communities that have historically faced institutional barriers to adopt a more proactive strategy in order to address existing needs. For example, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute recently issued a recommendation for “Latinos [to] develop their own private institutions, such as small businesses, to cater to their needs...[i]mproving minority access to capital so Hispanics can start their



own businesses will ultimately generate more wealth to reinvest in the community.” Similarly, the Minority Business Development Agency has stated that “America’s economic future is so inextricably linked with minority and immigrant groups that investment in these communities is essential...[w]omen and minorities comprise an increasingly important part of the U.S. economy that continues to rise in all sectors of the labor market.”

In an attempt to address the exclusion of the Latino community from resources that facilitate and promote economic advancement, and in light of Junta’s mission of advocating for Latino immigrants and providing them with the skills to empower themselves in the workplace and their own communities, Junta has been working on an Economic Development Program. The program will initially include **Financial Literacy workshops, Micro-Micro Loans and capacity building efforts for GAVA**

(Fair Haven’s only membership based organization of small businesses). Additional components include initiatives such as the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance project, which provides free tax assistance to neighborhood residents and determines eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit. These elements combined aim to promote neighborhood and commercial revitalization, encourage economic empowerment, and advocate for the economic advancement of low income, immigrant families and small businesses in the community.

Junta has already begun to implement some of the program components, including capacity building efforts with GAVA and the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance Project. To fully support this initiative Junta is pursuing funding from a variety of sources, including local ones.

If you are interested in supporting this initiative or for more information, please contact Kica Matos at (203) 787-0191.

## Junta and Gava – A New Partnership

Junta and GAVA (Grand Avenue Village Association) have recently entered in to an exciting new collaboration. Founded in 2001, GAVA is a membership based organization of business owners. Its mission is to improve the business climate of the Fair Haven neighborhood, improve the public perception of commercial opportunities and assist merchants increase their capacity and generate profit. The membership comprises of 65 companies. While retailers and restaurants make up the majority of members, service firms, contractors, retailers and non-profits are also represented.

The collaboration entered into is aimed at strengthening GAVA’s infrastructure and building capacity as it transitions into a non-profit organization with 501 (c)(3) status. While Junta will primarily assist GAVA with administrative, programmatic and institutional support, additional goals of the initiative include bringing small business health insurance

to the membership, and in the long term, creating a self-sufficient special services district aimed at maintaining the beauty of the avenue and building the economic wealth of the neighborhood. In turn, GAVA will provide Junta with expertise and guidance in a number of program areas, including employment and its nascent Economic Development Program. While both organizations will retain separate identities, it is expected that the nature of the cooperative relationship will continue to grow and develop over time.

Junta and GAVA believe that entering into this collaboration will not only benefit both organizations, but will strengthen the economic climate of the Fair Haven neighborhood and contribute to the prosperity and stability of the community.

## Come visit us!

### Junta for Progressive Action, Inc.

169 Grand Avenue  
New Haven, CT 06513

### Board of Directors -

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**Visit us online @:** [www.juntainc.org](http://www.juntainc.org)

Junta is a non-profit 501(C) (3) tax-exempt organization. If you would like to make a contribution, please make a check payable to: “Junta for Progressive Action, Inc.”.

### What are you doing this summer?

Do you want to become a volunteer or an intern at JUNTA?

If so, please call our offices at (203) 787-0191 and tell us more about yourself and your availability.