

HIEN CONTACTO!

The Official Newsletter of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis

DECEMBER 2009

In Memorium Chamber Co-Founder Anthony Ramirez



Anthony B. “Tony” Ramirez, a co-founder of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis, died Thursday, November 12, 2009 at St. Luke’s Hospital in Chesterfield. He was 72 and lived in Webster Groves.

In addition to his work for the Chamber, he founded or co-founded the Hispanic Leaders Group of Greater St. Louis, the Mexican

American Cultural Commission of Greater St. Louis, Hispanic Capitol Day, Inc., and HisPAC, a nonpartisan political action committee.

“Tony could simply have gone out and practiced law, but instead he dedicated himself to the betterment of the Hispanic community,” said Jorge Riopedre, president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Years earlier, Mr. Ramirez worked with then-Gov. Christopher “Kit” Bond to create Missouri’s first Hispanic Advisory Council.

“Tony was a friend and valued partner in our efforts to expand business and economic opportunities in the city of St. Louis,” Bond said in a statement.

Mr. Ramirez’s parents emigrated from Mexico. He grew up in Larned, Kan., the youngest of eight children. After earning a

history degree from St. Benedict’s College in Atchison, Kan., he moved to St. Louis.

For a time, he sold linoleum at a downtown store. He met a secretary named Marilyn Lee and invited her to the movies. They married in 1964.

Mr. Ramirez served in the Army Intelligence Corps, the Special Forces and the Green Berets.

He liked adventure. “He loved to jump out of airplanes when he was young,” his wife recalled.

He also wanted to help people, and he traded adventure for the law.

He graduated from Saint Louis University School of Law and eventually opened a small law firm downtown with a bilingual and varied practice.

Mr. Ramirez fought any legislation he felt would harm minority groups. In 2001, the American Jewish Committee gave him its Micah Award for social justice.

He organized Hispanic leaders to meet with legislators in Jefferson City. That led to an annual Hispanic Day at Jefferson City, Missouri’s capital.

“He wanted to help people, and that’s basically what he did” all his life, Marilyn Ramirez said.

Survivors, in addition to his wife, include two sons, Chris Ramirez of St. Louis and Andrew Ramirez of Franklin County; a brother, Joe Ramirez of Murrieta, Calif.; five sisters, Marie Linebaugh of Yellville, Ark., Lu Ulrich of Riverside, Calif., Becky Atkins of Encinitas, Calif., Rachel Clutter of Magna, Utah, and Helen Schwinden of Mount Vernon, Wash.; and one grandson.

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Edward Jones**Letter from the President**

Dear Chamber Members:

It is with great sadness that we observe the passing of a great man, Tony Ramirez. As the article on the cover page of this newsletter attests, he dedicated himself to personal excellence and to service. No one could hope for a better epitaph.

But it is with joy that we can say that Tony lived to see the opening of the Hispanic Chamber's Technology Center and that we now move forward to continue his legacy. He will be missed, but his spirit will always be with us, guiding us as we strive to do all we can for the Hispanic community of Missouri.



I hope all of you will join us in this effort. There is much work to be done. The economic situation is still very difficult. The specter of anti-Hispanic sentiment still lingers. And our children are still dealing with an education system ill-equipped to help them succeed in the future. The Hispanic Chamber will continue to take an active role in these issues. Already the Tech Center has featured a job fair that offered immediate, good paying jobs. We have provided (in Spanish) classes on starting your own business. We worked with the Regional Chamber & Growth Association to present a seminar on owning your own business. This month we are holding additional programs on marketing and obtaining minority certification. And starting in January we will be providing legal and financial professionals to give our members free advice that will help them sustain and grow their businesses.

In addition, we will continue to represent the Hispanic community in city, county, and state government, and our Foundation will be working on a variety of educational efforts, especially in conjunction with our partners, the University of Missouri – St. Louis and St. Louis Community College.

And so we say goodbye to Tony, but we do not forget him. Instead, we dedicate ourselves to following the example he set. And we will be forever thankful for the hard work he did to smooth the road that we will travel.

Sincerely,

Jorge Riopedre
President, HCCMSL

**MISSION STATEMENT OF
THE HISPANIC CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE**

The mission of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis is to promote the economic development of Hispanic firms and increase business opportunities for all in the St. Louis region.

Welcome New Members!

We are delighted to welcome the following to the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis.

World Trade Center – St. Louis

Ana Romero, Director
International Business Development
121 South Meramec Avenue
St Louis, MO 63105-1725
(314) 615-8141
www.worldtradecenter-stl.com

The Chamber would also thank the following for renewing their memberships with the Chamber:

Marti Cortez

(Professional Level)
5050 Oakland Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63110
(314) 289-1463
MCortez@slsc.org

TRC Staffing Services, Inc.

(Business Level)
Lydia Padilla, President
611 North Tenth Street - Suite # 675
St. Louis, MO 63101
(314) 621-5717
lydia.padilla@rcstaffing.com

The Chamber would like to extend special thanks to **Enterprise Rent-A-Car** for becoming a “Friend of the Chamber” supporter.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car

Lee Lewis, HR Generalist Manager
10144 Page Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63132
314.506.4973 direct
314.506.4999 fax
Lee.E.Lewis@erac.com
www.erac.com

New Web Site!

The Chamber has launched its new Web site. The URL remains the same: www.hccstl.com. Currently only the home page is live. The rest of the site will be up after December 12.

All members will receive a user-id and password, which will allow you to access the member database, special offers, and premium content.

Please feel free to contact the Chamber with any comments you may have about the new site.

New Services for Members

Starting in January, Mac McDougell of Regions Bank and Jasha McQueen of the law firm McQueen Gadberry, will be providing free financial and legal advice for our members. Each one will offer one day a month of their time to provide members with no strings attached answers to your questions. The start dates will be announced soon via email and on our Web site, Facebook page, and Twitter account. For more information, please call the Chamber at 314-664-4432.

Hiring Fair at the Tech Center

The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and member El Mundo Latino teamed up with River City Casino for a hiring event at the Technology & Resource Center (TRC). About 100 people attended to register on line and set interviews for the hundreds of jobs that River City Casino has available for its new South County casino.

“We were very pleased to have this event at our Resource Center,” said Chamber president Jorge Riopedre. “This is exactly why we worked so hard to establish our new facility: to help the Hispanic community find jobs and start their own businesses.”

The Chamber and River City are discussing future job fairs at the TRC.



Know the SCORE

The Web Is a Wide-Open World for Small Business Start-Ups

The Web has become the world's biggest shopping center, a 24/7/365 marketplace where people and businesses can shop for any product or service from anywhere.

The web is also the perfect place for entrepreneurs interested in setting up shop quickly with a minimum of capital. They can enjoy more management flexibility than their counterparts in "brick and mortar" businesses.

Of course, you still need the basics of any business—a legal structure; phones, computers, and other communications infrastructure; a bank account; budgeting, accounting, and marketing skills, insurance; etc. But you also have the advantage of several Web-based services that can help you establish a presence on the Web.

Service providers such as Interland, Yahoo Small Business, BigStep, 1&1 and others offer simplified do-it-yourself packages that make the setup process straightforward. Even with little tech know-how, you can get a basic Web site registered, designed and online quickly for as little as \$20 per month.

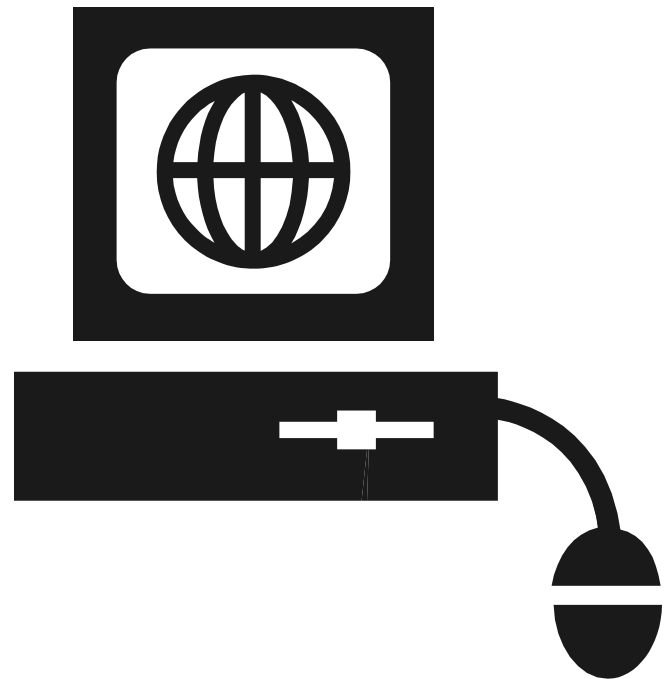
You'll still need to work hard at attracting customers, just like any new business. In some ways finding customers online is even harder because you are competing with millions of others doing the same thing. Make sure your Web site is listed in search engines and get more out of your listings. You'll find help for search engine submission at SearchEngineWatch.com.

This site offers submission tips, Web searching tips, search engine reviews and other resources. The key thing to remember is, your customer must be able to find your site quickly and be able to readily access the information they need in order to buy from you. Put yourself in the customer's shoes when designing and implementing your site.

Targeted ads attached to keyword search results are a great way to promote your wares. Their simplicity, low cost and popularity among small businesses have made them the main method for connecting buyers and merchants online. Business owners also like the concept because you pay only when someone clicks your ad and visits your site. Google AdWords, www.google.com/ads, is one of the leaders.

To get visitors more involved in your Web site, add surveys, guest books, auto responders and downloadable documents. Your Web host may offer some of these. Helpful resources include: ConstantContact.com and Topica.com. Also, take advantage of the tools and services available at the Microsoft Small Business Center at www.microsoft.com/smallbusiness. The site's Startup Center provides help with Web marketing, payment processing, online catalog creation, shopping carts, list building, banner ads and getting your Web site registered with search engines. Articles and guidance are also available on a wide range of e-business topics and trends.

To learn more about using the Web successfully for your small business, contact the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for mentoring to your business. You can also contact SCORE, "Counselors to America's Small Business" sponsored by HCC. SCORE is a nonprofit organization of volunteer business counselors who donate their time and expertise to assist Hispanic entrepreneurs in starting, growing and operating small businesses. The service is free and confidential. Call for an appointment at the HCC Technology Center (314) 771-4788 or log on to <http://www.hccstl.com>. The St. Louis office of SCORE is (314) 539-6600 ext. 242 or www.stlscore.org. The SCORE national web site has many small business aids, www.score.org.



Chamber Names Riopedre as Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has named current president Jorge Riopedre as the organization’s executive director, effective January 1.

Riopedre has served on the Chamber’s board for six years. For the last fifteen years, he was the owner of Cor Productions and CarisMedia, both of them communications companies based in St. Louis, Missouri. Riopedre has spent more than fifteen years specializing in creating content for the Hispanic market, including radio and television commercials, corporate and educational videos, and translation projects. He sits on the boards of the HCC STL Foundation, Hispanic Capitol Day, Inc., HisPAC, and the Catholic Academy for Communication Arts Professionals. He was appointed by Missouri Governor Matt Blunt to the Hispanic Business, Culture & Trade Commission, and by current Governor Jay Nixon to the Missouri Complete Count Commission. Jorge was previously named a Minority Business Leader by the St. Louis Business Journal.

Business After Hours Visits Monsanto

Last month, the Chamber’s Business After Hours event was Chamber Platinum Sponsor Monsanto at its global headquarters in Creve Coeur.

In addition to the usual great networking among Chamber members and their guests, everyone was able to get a first hand look at how the process works for becoming a Monsanto supplier. Daphanie Pointer, Marty Rutkovitz, and Maurine Schmidt spoke, respectively, about Business Conduct, Safety and Security, and Procurement within the Supplier Diversity Program. Chamber members were encouraged to ask questions and seek out the many supplier opportunities available.

As the Chamber’s sole Platinum Sponsor, Monsanto has been instrumental in the Chamber’s success. The company’s support has provided much of the wherewithal for the programs that the Chamber runs, and for a number of scholarships that have been awarded to Hispanic-American students of higher education.

The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis expresses its most sincere appreciation to Monsanto for its partnership, and we look forward to many more years of working together to support the Hispanic business community of the metro St. Louis area.



Next year, all Business After Hours (BAH) events will be held at the Technology & Resource Center. For information about BAH sponsorship opportunities, please call the Chamber at 314-664-4432, or email at info@hccstl.com.

more photos on page 8

Caveat Employer: Employer Beware of State and Federal Immigration Focus

By Amanda Miranda - Early, Miranda, & Petroberg LLC

In Missouri, the beginning of 2009 triggered the implementation of a comprehensive immigration bill, imposing new employer-related state requirements. Perhaps one of the more talked about requirements for employers is the need to E-verify their newly hired employees. The use of E-verify, a federal employment verification database, is mandatory in Missouri for public employers and all businesses receiving a state contract, tax credit, or abatement of more than \$5,000. Although private employers in Missouri are not required to use E-verify under the newly implemented law, many are considering doing so because participation in the program is an affirmative defense to the allegation that a business knowingly hired an illegal alien.

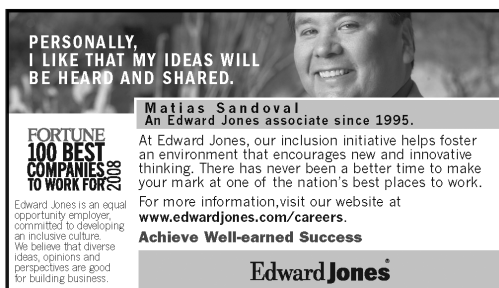
Missouri law imposes penalties on employers for knowingly employing an illegal alien. The penalties begin with a suspension of the company's business license for 14 days for the first violation, and increase to a year's suspension for a second violation. The third or subsequent violations will result in a permanent suspension. In addition to these penalties, state contractors will lose their contract and be barred from doing business in the state for three years, if they are found to knowingly employ illegal aliens. A second violation for state contractors can result in not only permanent termination of the contract, but also permanent disbarment from conducting business in Missouri.

Missouri's focus on employer responsibility to help implement a legal workforce appears to go hand-in-hand with the shift in the federal government's focus under the current

administration. While large workplace raids with emphasis on the illegal worker were a notable component of prior immigration policy, the Department of Homeland Security has now indicated that they intend to put more emphasis on employers, rather than just illegal aliens. This emphasis specifically includes investigating and reviewing employment records with the full intent to assess fines for immigration violations committed by employers. Recently, John Morton, assistant secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), has advised that the market for illegal labor needs to be addressed. He has stated that "to get there, we have to move beyond individual cases" and said that the focus will be "first and foremost on the employer." At the beginning of July of this year, ICE advised that the hiring records of more than 600 businesses would be inspected to check for immigration violations, noting that more inspections would come. Illegal workers will naturally still face arrest and other actions as violations are uncovered.

As the proverbial bull's-eye of the target appears to have re-centered on the employer, it is imperative for businesses to be aware not only of federal law, but state regulations and penalties, to ensure compliance at both levels in workplace immigration issues.

Ms. Miranda is a founding principal at Early, Miranda, & Petroberg LLC, specializing in workers' compensation defense in Missouri and Illinois, civil insurance defense in Missouri and employer immigration compliance. She can be reached at amiranda@emp-pc.com



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the foundation for all that we do

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Hipólito Hernández
314-280-2779

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Business After Hours
At Puckett Floor Coverings
Thursday, December 17, 2009
6:00 – 8:30 pm
RSVP: 314-664-4432,
or staff@hccstl.com



All photos courtesy of Joe Bommarito

MEET WITH US!

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