Multicultural Center launches 10th anniversary celebration on April 28

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The Moab Valley Multicultural Center (MVMC) has spent 10 years building bridges across language and culture through family support, community collaboration and education, and their staff says it’s about time to celebrate. A “pink themed” public party featuring music, yard games, and, of course, cake will ring in the multicultural center’s 10th anniversary on April 28. The party will be the first in a series of events that will be held throughout the year, center officials say.

“For me, the 10th anniversary is a milestone,” said MVMC Director Rhiana Medina. “It’s a time that’s very appropriate to celebrate everything that has taken place in the last decade that has culminated in what the center is today.”

The MVMC first opened its doors in 2007, serving as a volunteer-managed nonprofit organization that representatives say aimed to fill a local gap in services for minority groups. The organization has since expanded to a staff of six “bilingual advocates,” as well as a “corps” of more than 500 volunteers and dozens of partner organizations, MVMC officials say.

“I feel very impressed and very thankful to see how much we have grown,” said center founder and Outreach Director Leticia Bentley.

MVMC Volunteer Coordinator Katlyn Keane has worked at the center for more than three years, and in that time, says she has witnessed the organization grow by leaps and bounds.

“I recognize that while the staff has only gotten more efficient, it has also been the donors, volunteers and friends of the center who have helped us grow,” Keane said. “I hope that this 10-year celebration is not only a fun party to commemorate an important milestone, but also a way to say thank you to the community that has helped us get to where we are.”
The center provides a variety of services, including crisis response, interpretation and translation services, language and life skills support, as well as youth and cultural education and outreach.

“I feel that the MVMC plays a vital role in Moab,” said MVMC Outreach Coordinator Joanna Onorato. “Basically, we offer help wherever we are needed.”

As the needs in the Moab community have grown, so too has the multicultural center, Medina says.

“We started with three [people], then we had four, then five. Now we have six,” Medina said. “Every time we add someone, we ask ‘how did we do this before with less people?’ The multicultural center has grown in response to the need ... It’s following the pattern of the need.”

Medina says the MVMC relies on a variety of funding sources to support its services and programming, including foundation grants, as well as individual donations and local giving like sponsorships and fundraising.

Such funding sources have allowed the center to provide 2,474 hours of direct services in 2016 alone, center representatives say.

“Attendance at MVMC cultural events has tripled in the last three years, and popular youth programs like the ‘Amigo to Amiguitos’ mentoring program are in great demand,” representatives said in a recent news release. “Perhaps less well known is the increase in crisis response services provided by MVMC for all kinds of situations which disrupt family and work life such as legal issues, housing or food insecurity, medical emergencies, or domestic violence.”

As to the future of the organization, Medina says, “nothing will ever stand in the way of us continuing to serve the community.”

“... Sometimes we think about ‘multicultural’ as just through the lens of minority cultures, but it's everybody,” she said. “It’s old school Moab, new school Moab — it’s everything that we all bring to the table. ... Our mission is to build bridges across language and culture, but it wouldn’t be a bridge if it was serving one sub-population. It’s about connection. Our entire community is our client.”

The MVMC’s 10-year anniversary party is open to the public and will be held at the center’s courtyard, 156 North 100 West, on April 28 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

ByBy Molly Marcello

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