



OYA reaches out to communities on foster care



Sanjuana Cantu (left) and Heidi Lung staff the OYA table at the Salem Convention Center.

May 19, 2015

OYA foster care staff spent the day actively recruiting for culturally specific, Spanish-speaking foster parents at the annual Latino Small Business and Workforce Conference. Held May 16 at the Salem Convention Center, the conference offered information and exhibits on local programs, services and products.

Sanjuana Cantu and Heidi Lung networked with many Latino families who attended the seven-hour conference. “The day was spent not just recruiting for foster parents, but also educating our community on what the Oregon Youth Authority is, what our mission is and the need for foster families to work with our kids, especially Spanish speaking families,” said Lung, foster care certifier in Marion and surrounding counties. “Most of the participants were not aware of OYA and that we operated our own foster care system.”

Cantu spoke with participants about OYA and the need for Latino foster families. Most of them preferred to speak in Spanish and many shared

that they knew a friend or family member who may be interested in foster parenting.

One couple said foster care training was a barrier due to their schedules. “The good thing about our program is we will bring the training to you and make it work with you schedules,” Cantu told the couple, who scheduled an in-home meeting with OYA certifiers following the conference. Cantu also spoke with a participant who was interested in having her speak at his local church.

“Overall, the response was positive as we spoke with the participants about OYA’s youth and the need to support them after they return to the community as productive, crime-free citizens,” said Cantu.

Some participants were misinformed about the requirements for OYA foster care. “Our process and requirements actually are less complex compared to other agencies, even the Department of Human Services,” said Lung. “It’s not as burdensome as some people think.”

A premier sponsor of the conference was Woodburn radio station La Campeona 880 AM. Cantu was interviewed live by the station’s Jose Alfaro about the need for OYA foster families and provided listeners with a contact number.

Maria Chavez-Haroldson (right), director of OYA’s Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations, also attended the conference and spoke with participants.



To learn more about OYA foster care, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/oya/pages/foster.aspx>