



Pictured (left to right) Mr. Diego Uriburu, Program Director of Identity, Inc., the Exemplary Organization Award winner, Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr, Mrs. Marianela del Pino Rivera, nominator, Ms. Candance Kattar, Executive Director of Identity, Inc, and Ms. Lilly Cubano, nominator

## **Exemplary Organization Award Identity**

Nominated by Ms. Marianela del Pino-Rivera and Ms. Lilly Cubano

Ms. Marianela del Pino-Rivera wrote:

**Identity, Inc. is a non-profit organization formed in 1998 as a labor of love its executive director and its program director. The organization recently purchased a house in Gaithersburg, renovated the house and opened its doors to the Latino youth in Montgomery County area in early 2004.**

**After conducting a detailed needs assessment survey of the Latino youth in the Montgomery County area in 2002, they found that many of the youth were immigrants living in poverty with poor academic performance and study habits. Many had been separated from their parents and were alone after school. All of these issues contributed to the high propensity of drug and alcohol usage, engagement in sexual acts with risk of HIV infection, and participation in gangs.**

**Since October of 2002, Identity has offered after school group sessions for adolescent Latinos in Montgomery County in partnership with Gaithersburg schools using the curriculum developed by Identity. In these educational sessions, the children participated in various activities that develop communication skills, leadership, social skills, group skills, the prevention of drug and alcohol usage, HIV prevention, and sexual education. In turn, the children are taught to help their friends and classmates using the various skills learned in the group sessions, and thus the work of Identity is multiplied, and leaders are developed.**

Ms. Lilly Cubano wrote:

**I've personally have seen this Community Based Organization grow since their very beginning as an observer and as Contract Manager. I have one little anecdote that I could add to Marianela del Pino Identity's nomination. Last month, I took two of Identity's high-risk youth to the Outward Bound Program and they were the only two kids that didn't speak much English, but they were excited and agreed to go. When they returned after two weeks, I had the opportunity to see their graduation. One by one all the counselors spoke about the kids in general and when they got to the Identity kids all the other students started to applaud Not only did the Identity youth were mentioned as able to help fellow participants, good hikers, best at reading maps, etc, but as best leaders. For me this was a proud moment because these teenagers came to this country 2 years ago with nothing. They were involved in gangs and now they were told that if they want to take the advanced training they could become counselors for this national program. That speaks volumes about Candace Kattar and Diego Uriburu's magnificent job in "raising" these high-risk youth.**



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