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Coming Together and Building Community Through The Radio Waves

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Building connections is vital to our community; feeling a sense of family and having a friendly voice within reach is an invaluable service. Our guest Linda Parra shares her story about Nuestra Gente Radio and her mission for a community center in Toledo, Ohio. Join us for this interesting conversation.



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Could you tell us a bit about your background?

I am from Venezuela and started doing radio when I was 18 years old. I went to law school but did not finish; I started my own marketing company and helped in producing radio and television shows in my country. In 2000, I came to the U.S. and by 2005, I had produced and hosted the Nuestra Gente Radio Show to address a lack of Spanish-language programming in the Toledo community. After launching the show, I quickly discovered other needs in the underserved Hispanic/Latino community and felt compelled to establish the nonprofit Nuestra Gente Community Projects, Inc. (NGCPI) in 2008. As Founder and President of NGCPI, I encouraged, advocated for, and empowered a multitude of families and community members toward goals once believed unimaginable. Nine years later in 2017, I launched the city's first fully Spanish-language FM radio station, WVZC-LP 96.5 FM. This year, I launched the city's first-ever Spanish-language radio newscast, Nuestra Gente Noticias.

What were you doing before deciding to launch Nuestra Gente, and what might people be surprised to learn about you?

Before launching and producing Nuestra Gente, I worked in the private sector. I also had the opportunity to be challenged in the non-profit field through my employment. People may not realize what it takes to build and maintain a presence in the radio and broadcast space; I spend on average 14+ hours a day focused on this passion, much of that time is unpaid.

What is the one quality you feel best describes you?

I have always been a very passionate person committed to making a difference and helping people in need. My work with Nuestra Gente lets me reach many families and individuals to make their lives just a little bit better, and that's important to me.

Can you tell us about Nuestra Gente for those who do not live in the Toledo area?

Nuestra Gente Community Projects, Inc (NGCPI) is a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization on a mission to improve the lives of Toledo's underserved communities. Founded in Toledo in November 2008 to serve the Hispanic/Latino community, it has since expanded its mission and objectives for the inclusion of all community members in need. NGCPI embraces and values the innumerable

benefits of a diverse community working together for the progress of all. NGCPI is a champion for education, health, and the overall enrichment of life in Lucas County, Ohio. Our vision is to contribute to a healthy and artistically vibrant community.

NGCPI takes seriously our responsibility to provide culturally and linguistically diverse access to services by providing this much needed expertise in our community. Our purpose is to make services quick and easy to access for the population, where security and good attention is guaranteed. The vision of contributing to a healthy and artistically vibrant community is the measure used for programs developed and implemented by NGCPI. In service to these core values, the organization promotes education, social services, health and safety awareness, multiculturalism and diversity awareness, and artistic expression.

What motivated you to start Toledo's first-ever Spanish-language radio newscast?

I've worked in radio and television for so long and I wanted to offer my expertise to the Hispanic / Latino communities of Toledo and neighboring cities. There was a need to open a radio station in their own language for a population that grows more every day, there is great value in keeping them informed of current events and also in promoting and preserving the Latino culture.



What is it like to be a radio news anchor?

Being a news anchor is an exciting and fast-paced job. Not only does it require a lot of hard work, making rigid deadlines, but also the ability to talk to the most difficult people. You have to be able to talk with anyone about almost anything, and along the way, you can come across some great people.

What is the most difficult part about running a Spanish-language radio newscast, and what has been most rewarding?

The most difficult part is to get professionals with experience in the medium who speak Spanish. The most enjoyable and rewarding part of my job with the radio station is definitely the listeners' comments when they say that having this radio station is one of the best things that has happened to them. They are happy to have a Spanish speaking radio station in their car and that it was needed in Toledo.

Could you share with us how you go about broadcasting? How do you arrange what stories to cover in the day's work or throughout the week?

First, I read news reports in areas of interest to our readers and get the most relevant headlines. Then I script a Spanish-language broadcast to keep our listeners informed, and, if possible, we try to localize the news to our readers. We also schedule live interviews with local politicians and community leaders and tailor our questions to the interests of the city's Spanish-speaking community.

What were the skills or strategies that you needed to get Nuestra Gente up and running?

Three words describe the trajectory. First is passion—a conviction that the radio station had the potential to fill an unmet need. Second is advocacy—because needless to say, breaking ground on the radio or television space is very competitive. It takes someone with the ability to advocate to drive the sense of urgency. Third is professionalism—your word is only as good as your performance, and I take my work very seriously.

Can you share with us what in the forecast for Nuestra Gente?

Next is the Nuestra Gente Community Center. NGCPI recently acquired a new building at 1411 Broadway, Toledo. NGCPI's dream is to turn the historic building into a fantastic home for NGCPI and its services. We need funds for renovating and upgrading the space, which will become a nonprofit center serving the community. The building effort will not only provide key services for a community in need, but it will help revitalize one of Toledo's historic South Side neighborhoods.

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