

Centro del Barrio

Central to the history of Centro del Barrio is Ernesto Gomez. He was a student who enrolled in a funded program at Our Lady of the Lake University called Project Teacher Excellence (PTE). However, he became interested in Social Work and left the program. While working at Wesley Community Center, he was recruited by Sister Immaculate who had befriended him when he was in PTE. The Worden School of Social Work had received funding from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIHM) to recruit and train Hispanic Social Workers. Yet Worden had neither Hispanic faculty nor appropriate curriculum for training them. Ernesto was needed to recruit Hispanic students and prepare a curriculum that would train them to work with Hispanic clients in poverty, taking their language and culture into account. Ernesto began studying for a doctorate in Social Work at the University of Texas (Austin) while continuing to work on other grant projects for NIMH. His dissertation was based on the work he did as an assistant to Professor Guadalupe Gibson. His work with her was interrupted and almost terminated because of governmental bickering over funding. However, Congress managed to restore the funds and the project continued. It continues today with a large staff of social workers, medical professionals and support staff. Ernesto Gomez is the Executive Director and the driving force in the Centro's ever expanding service to the community of the West-side of San Antonio.