



**Media only:** Isabel Lara (202) 633-0972 or [larai@si.edu](mailto:larai@si.edu)

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**Media Web site:** <http://newsdesk.si.edu>

## **Smithsonian Latino Center's Young Ambassadors Arrive for Week of Cultural Programs in Washington, D.C.**

Twenty-one graduating high school seniors with an interest and commitment to the arts will be in Washington from Sunday, June 24 through Friday, June 29 for an arts enrichment seminar at the Smithsonian Institution as part of the Smithsonian Latino Center's Young Ambassadors Program. Afterward, they will return to cultural organizations in their communities for a paid, four-week summer internship.

The program—a national educational initiative designed to foster knowledge and pride in Latino cultural identity among high school seniors gifted in the arts—will enable the Young Ambassadors to gain practical experience in the cultural field and have a hands-on opportunity to promote Latino heritage.

“Our goal is to help our Young Ambassadors become the next generation of leaders in the arts and culture fields,” said Pilar O’Leary, director of the Smithsonian Latino Center. “This program encourages students to be proud of their roots and learn more about their cultural heritage to inspire them to educate the public in their own communities about how Latinos are enriching America’s cultural fabric.”

This year’s Young Ambassadors are from California, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Texas, Virginia and Washington, D.C. They were selected because of their outstanding grades, dedication to community service and passion for the arts.

During their week in Washington, they will attend workshops with well-known Latino artists and professionals working in cultural fields, such as artist Xavier Cortada; Hector Cantú, creator of the “Baldo” comic strip; and Michel Vega, head of Latin Music for the William Morris Agency. The Young Ambassadors also will participate in programs that encourage them to examine Latino identity and embrace their cultural heritage through firsthand observation of the Smithsonian’s Latino collections and behind-the-scenes tours with Smithsonian experts. The students will be honored at a reception Thursday, June 28 at the Smithsonian Institution Building (“Castle”).

Among the this year’s Young Ambassadors are Cristina María Díaz, who will major in art education at Florida International University; Jesús Espinoza, who is the former vice president for his school’s Red Cross Club in San José, Calif., and hopes to become a writer and human rights activist; and David Hernández, who is from Chicago and hopes to use his art to bridge the gap between his Mexican heritage and his United States upbringing.

The PepsiCo Foundation is the lead sponsor of the program; Goya Foods also provided generous support.

“PepsiCo is proud to be a major supporter for the second year of the Young Ambassadors program,” said David Gonzalez, Vice President of Community Relations, PepsiCo. “The opportunity to help develop and support young emerging leaders within the Latino community is a privilege and speaks to the importance of the strategic partnership with the Smithsonian.”

Selected students will travel to one of the following museums to fulfill the internship component:

- Bass Museum of Art in Miami
- The Carnival Center for the Performing Arts in Miami
- Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York City
- Mexican Heritage Plaza in San Jose, Calif.
- Museo Alameda in San Antonio
- The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston
- Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach, Calif.
- National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, N.M.
- National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago
- Philadelphia Museum of Art
- Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.
- Smithsonian’s Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C.
- Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.
- The Wolfsonian – FIU in Miami

The Smithsonian Latino Center is a division of the Smithsonian Institution that ensures Latino contributions to art, science and the humanities are highlighted, understood and advanced through the development and support of public programs, scholarly research, museum collections and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution and its affiliated organizations across the United States and internationally.

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