

Hispanic Role Models Inspire Students at San Antonio Conference

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San Antonio, TX – Hispanic professionals from diverse backgrounds will share their educational and professional journeys with middle school students during a youth conference themed “Take Action! Achieve your Dreams,” at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, TX on Friday, May 15. This is the 15th youth conference hosted by Hispanics Inspiring Students’ Performance and Achievement (HISPA) a nonprofit organization that connects Hispanic role models and middle school students to inspire students to excel, graduate and go on to higher education.

The conference will showcase inspirational speakers on the theme of “achieving your dreams.” Joaquín Zihuatanejo, award-winning American slam poet and teacher, will be the Master of Ceremonies. The keynoter is Linda Chávez-Thompson, a former union leader and a member of the board of trustees of [United Way of America](#). Dr. Richard Cardenas of St. Mary’s University, a 2009 Presidential Award honoree for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring, will speak on the importance of STEM careers and his passion for physics. The event will close with an inspirational address by paralympian amputee Thomas Bourgeois and Verónica Kole an inspirational-bilingual singer.

The Youth Conference is being hosted by The Office of Student Retention at St. Mary’s University with the support of Rosalind Alderman, Ph.D., Assistant VP for Retention Management and Title V Project Director. The HISPA 2015 San Antonio Youth Conference lead supporter is Educational Testing Service (ETS). Many ETS San Antonio employees and other Latino public and private sector professionals will also share their journeys with the students. Hands-on workshops will give a first glance at STEM careers: “Path to Engineering,” hosted by the Society of Professional Hispanic Engineers (SHPE); “The Hour of Code,” presented by Rackspace VIVA; “Groundwater Sleuthing” by San Antonio Water Systems, “Not Just a Science, but a Way of Life” by Dr. José Tormos Meléndez from St. Mary’s University Chemistry Department; and “Engineering-Keep It Going” by Dr. Elena Florea of St. Mary’s University. The workshops will be followed by a panel titled “Life After High School,” moderated by Dean of Students, Dr. Tim Bessler, also of St. Mary’s University.

“Friday will be filled with inspiring stories of hard work and great accomplishments, with plenty of outstanding role models who will share their passion for STEM careers,” said Ivonne Díaz-Claisse, Ph.D., president and founder of HISPA. “Research shows a strong correlation between students having a role model and their pursuit of higher education, and that’s why we started HISPA. We want students to envision possibilities and achieve their dreams.”

Following the conference, HISPA Role Models and volunteers are invited to attend a professional development program and reception from 2:00 p.m. to 4 p.m.

HISPA’s annual partners are ETS, ESPN, Verizon, Comcast, and Southwest Airlines. For more information about HISPA please visit www.hispa.org.

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