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LATINO YOUTH HEADS TO PRINCETON WITH BUSINESS COMMUNITY'S SUPPORT.

AURORA, IL (July 1, 2008) -- With school and gang violence crowding the headlines, positive role models are desperately needed to show that there are better alternatives to caving in to the dead-end lifestyle. Where can we find the emerging leaders for a new generation?

In Aurora, IL, Roberto Saenz has grown up in a neighborhood where gangs and drugs are commonplace. He has been told that his high school is "lower class" and inadequate. But the high school junior and honor student isn't letting the negatives hold him back. This summer, he is attending the 2008 Junior Statesman Summer Scholars Program at Princeton University, a college preparatory program that cultivates young leaders. To get there, Roberto needed to overcome two major hurdles: be one of only 250 students accepted from schools around the country, and find the \$5,000 to pay his way.

With the support of his mentor, Clayton Muhammad, founder of Boys II Men, Roberto demonstrated his worth to Princeton and was accepted. In addition to his high grades, Roberto is Vice President of Boys II Men, a local youth program dedicated to breaking stereotypes through positive work in the community. He is also a tireless volunteer for school and church activities.

After being accepted to the Junior Statesman Summer Scholars Program, Roberto tackled the financial challenge. He sent letters to friends, neighbors, and businesses, advising them, "I truly have a passion for changing the world and this experience of participating in the 2008 Junior Statesman Summer Scholars Program will be the catalyst for a brighter future!"

Muhammad introduced Roberto to Robert Renteria, a successful businessman who shares Muhammad's passion for mentoring. Muhammad and Roberto attended the launch of Renteria's book, *From the Barrio to the Board Room*, the story of his own rise from rough beginnings. At that event, Renteria took the time to talk to Roberto about his dreams.

"He told me, 'you can do this if you keep trying' and it doesn't matter where you come from as long as you have a goal and determination," says Roberto, who was inspired by *From the Barrio to the Board Room* and shared the book with his mother, Catalina, the single parent of three children. Like Roberto, her older children have excelled academically. Her daughter is majoring in radio and television production at Columbia University and her son is a freshman at the University of Illinois-Chicago, where he is studying chemical engineering.

Renteria saw in Roberto the same fiery passion that he had as a youth, fueled by the desire to make a better life. "Roberto is looking forward, not back, and he has such a solid vision for his future. We have to cultivate young men and women to make the right

choices, one person, one community at a time," says Renteria, co-founder of WashPro USA, a successful coin laundry distribution and consulting firm in Westchester, IL.

According to Catalina Saenz, Roberto returned from his meeting with Renteria beaming with joy. "He said, 'Mom, I met this man and now I know I can do anything.' Robert was responsible for giving my son the determination to raise the funds to achieve his dream."

Roberto raised \$3,000 through this effort but was still coming up short, so Renteria stepped in. As a member of the board of directors for the Aurora Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, he championed Roberto's cause to his colleagues. Like Renteria, the AHCC firmly believes in nurturing emerging leaders from the local community. The organization agreed to fund the remaining \$2,000 for Roberto's tuition from its foundation funds.

"We are supporting one of tomorrow's great leaders, I'm sure," says Renteria.

Roberto Saenz is spending part of his summer at Princeton University. With continued hard work, he hopes to spend four more years there after he graduates from East Aurora High School in 2009. He sees his future as either a history professor or politician. But regardless of his chosen path, Roberto says, "I always want to make a difference in the world around me, to help people and my community. I want to be an example for others, to show them that you can do anything if you just believe you can."

From the Barrio to the Board Room is available from Writers of the Round Table Press. For interviews with Renteria or to request a copy of From the Barrio to the Board Room for review, contact Sue Publicover, 207.752.4802 or Kim Jackson, 802.345.9730.

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