Rhumb Lines: National Hispanic Heritage Month

By Navy Office of Information

"Today, contributions of Hispanics to the mission of the Navy are woven into every segment of naval operations. Recognizing that America's strength lies in its diversity, it is in the Department of the Navy's best interest to draw from every diverse group in our nation. We must leverage the strength of the diversity that our nation and our people have to offer." – The Honorable Juan M. Garcia, III, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Manpower and Reserve Affairs

Hispanic Heritage Month was established in 1988 to celebrate the culture and traditions of those who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean. While originally proclaimed as National Heritage Week in 1968, Hispanic Heritage Month is now celebrated from Sept. 15 – Oct. 15, coinciding with the anniversaries of the independence of five Latin American countries, Mexico and Chile. At a population of more than 48 million, Hispanics comprise our nation's largest ethnic or racial minority. This month's theme, "Heritage, Diversity, Integrity, and Honor: The Renewed Hope of America," reflects the unique experiences and contributions that Hispanics have made to our nation.

Recognizing our diversity. The Navy's strength is a product of its diversity. Hispanics have served bravely in the Navy through every war and conflict since the American Revolution. Today, more than 63,000 Hispanic and Latino Sailors and civilians serve in the Navy's total force. Some notable Hispanics in our Navy, past and present, include:

• Naval aviator Cmdr. Everett Alvarez, who was shot down over Vietnam in 1964 and withstood more than eight years of torture and solitary confinement before being released.

• Cmdr. Yvette Davids became the first Hispanic woman to command a surface combatant when she took command of the *USS Curts* (FFG 38) in 2007.

• Edward Hildago became the first Hispanic to serve as secretary of the Navy in 1979.

• Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Phillip Azevedo was awarded a Bronze Star for his actions during a 12-month individual augmentee deployment to Afghanistan in 2009.

• Rear Adm. Samuel Perez, commander of Task Force 42, oversaw all port activities and coordination during Operation Unified Response in Haiti in January 2010.

• Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fuel) 2nd Class Estella M. Garcia, of Naval Air Technical Training Center, and Mr. John J. Evans, of Naval Sea Systems Command, were recipients of the 2010 National Organization of Mexican American Rights (NOMAR) Meritorious Service Award.

Engaging in diversity outreach – highlighting achievements. Each year, the Navy's sustained outreach efforts contact a variety of diverse populations. Events highlighting the achievements of Hispanics during Hispanic Heritage Month include:

• Hispanic Engineering, Science and Technology Week, Sept. 26 - Oct. 2, Edinburg, Texas.

• Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists Symposium, Sept. 29 - Oct. 3, Anaheim, Calif.

• Hispanic Engineer National Achievements Awards Corporation Conference, Oct. 7-9, Orlando, Fla.

Key Messages

• The Navy proudly joins the nation in the commemoration of Hispanic Heritage Month and the celebration of our nation's diversity.

• The Navy employs top-performing Sailors and civilians whose diverse backgrounds, experiences and skills are necessary to meet today's challenges.

• The Navy supports the Association of Naval Services Officers, an affinity group that fosters the advancement and recognition of Hispanic officers in the sea services.

Facts and figures

• Four admirals, three members of the senior executive service and 156 master chief petty officers of Hispanic heritage are leading the Navy today.

• A showcase of notable Hispanics in the Navy's history can be found at the Navy History and Heritage Command website at http://www.history.navy.mil/.

• The U.S. Navy's Spanish language recruiting website is available at www.elnavy.com.

• Presentation aids are available from the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.

Presidential Proclamation: National Hispanic Heritage Month

From the early settlers of the New World to those reaching for the American dream today, Hispanics have shaped and strengthened our country. During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we pause to celebrate the immeasurable contributions these individuals have made to our nation - from its inception to its latest chapters.

Reflecting the remarkable diversity of the American people, Hispanics represent a wide range of nationalities and backgrounds. Like so many Americans, Hispanics have overcome great obstacles to persevere and flourish in every sector of our society. With enduring values of faith and family, hard work and sacrifice, Hispanics have preserved the rich heritage of generations past while contributing mightily to the promise of our nation for their children and grandchildren.

President Barack Obama and Justice Sonia Sotomayor meet in the Oval Office prior to a reception for the new Supreme Court Justice at the White House, Aug. 12, 2009. Sotomayor became the 111th Supreme Court Justice, the third female Justice, and the first Hispanic Justice in our nation's history.

White House photo by Pete Souza

Hispanics are leaders in all aspects of our national life, from the Supreme Court and halls of Congress to boardrooms and main streets. Across America, Hispanics protect neighborhoods as police officers and first responders, guide young people as teachers and mentors, and boost economic growth as business owners and operators. As members of the armed forces, heroic Hispanic men and women have also fought and died to defend the liberties and security of the United States in every war since the American Revolution, many serving before becoming American citizens.

This month, we honor Hispanics for enriching the fabric of America, even as we recognize and rededicate ourselves to addressing the challenges to equality and opportunity that many Hispanics still face. In reflecting on our nation's rich Hispanic heritage, let us take pride in our unique and vibrant history, and recommit to a shared future of freedom, prosperity and opportunity for all.

To mark the achievements of Hispanics in the United States, the Congress, by Public Law 100-402, as amended, has authorized and requested the president to issue annually a proclamation designating September 15 through October 15 as "National Hispanic Heritage Month."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 15 through October 15, 2010, as National Hispanic Heritage Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities and programs.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth. – Barack Obama

CFC GOALS, con't from pg. 8

Work added that although there are numerous reasons the CFC has remained integral in the DoN, the thousands of sea service members and Department of Defense (DoD) employees choosing to participate in the program are who ensure the program's continuing legacy.

"One reason why we're successful is because of our Sailors, Marines and civilians," said Work. "They have already dedicated their lives to providing a service to the country. They understand what it means to give and what it means to sacrifice."

Of the more than 4,000 charities eligible for participation in the 2010 CFC, numerous charities maintain close military ties, including Puppies Behind Bars, an organization which trains and donates aide dogs to Wounded Warriors.

"The CFC is an incredibly important donor to us not only because of the amount of funds generated as a whole but also because when we get private individuals who want to give us money from their paychecks it tells us that the work we are doing is important," said Gloria Gilbert Stoga, Puppies Behind Bars president.

DoN CFC expectations during 2009 were set at 3.82 million dollars, but more than 4 million dollars were collected. DoN CFC organizers established a goal of 3.9 million dollars for this year's campaign.

The CFC, officially formed in 1964 as a test project in six cities, consolidated numerous charity drives into one annual combined campaign resulting in a substantial increase in contributions ranging from 20 percent to 125 percent. In 1971, former President Richard Nixon announced that the CFC would be the uniform fundraising method for the federal service.

Pacific Combined Federal Campaign-Overseas Coordinator Kitty Malcolm trains unit coordinators and volunteers for the 2009 campaign here at the Community Readiness Center Sept. 10, 2009. The 2010 overseas campaign begins Oct. 4.

Photo by Dan Bowen