

Program in Spanish of the IAMAW union trains integral leaders

The school also teaches Latino workers to lobby Congress

Ricardo Sánchez-Silva | 2/20/2018, 12:31 p.m.



Caption: The educational center has more than a hundred rooms and houses the participants for a week of training | Courtesy



A trajectory of more than 30 years of being founded supports the Educational and Technology Center "William W. Winpisinger" in Hollywood, Maryland. This institution trains workers belonging to one of the largest unions in the US, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW), to teach them how to exercise their leadership roles and training on defending workers' rights.

In particular, the center has a training program in Spanish that was created 12 years ago and has grown over time. Its coordinator, Edmundo Osorio, affirms that 2006, when the first class was taught in Spanish was significant, since they included members coming from places like Puerto Rico, Canada, Hawaii and the Island of Guam.

Osorio: "When the students are here we have six full-time instructors that all come from the factory floor." | Courtesy

"When the students are here we have six full-time instructors that all come from the factory floor. We all start there, because we are workers. In addition to instructors we are activists and we inspire workers to also be active. We encourage them to raise their voices in their communities and to consider human rights, to do so without fear employer retaliation, because it is important that they feel confident and understand their protection under the labor laws, that they know their rights and know what they can and cannot do." Osorio told El Tiempo Latino.

According to the institution, by studying the history of unions and the role they have in our society, its members learn that these are much more than service organizations. They are part of a broader movement that promotes economic and social justice in the workplace and in the community. "Whether it's a member, a shop steward, a local or district lodge officer, a Business or Grand Lodge Representative, everyone who attends the center returns to their locals better-prepared for their jobs and more motivated to work positively in favor of our members."

"The participants arrive here in Hollywood on a Saturday; we have 114 rooms, private bathrooms and double bed, television and a balcony. There is a golf course and a tennis court. We provide them breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The program starts on Sunday at 8 am and ends on Friday at 5 pm. For the tasks we assign them, they can use a library that we have here, as well as the computers. "said education representative Jorge Bonilla.

Osorio also assured that the members are very grateful for the work that is carried out, since not only do they teach them how to advocate for others, they also educate them in the political area to demand their rights. Thus, lobbying is included as part of the program. "We take the whole group to the Capitol and we divide them according to the states they come from, so that they can talk to their representatives and get support on worker's issues."

To date, the school's Spanish-speaking program has received more than a thousand students in its sessions which are held eight times a year and continues to grow. In the last leadership class, more participants registered in the Spanish than in English.



Courtesy | 2/20/2018

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