

June 11, 2009 – Presentation by Melisa Taylor on Hogar Latino , a program for Spanish speakers in Harrison County, Indiana.

Melisa Taylor, Executive Director of Hogar Latino at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, in Corydon, Indiana, describes the organization she co-founded to provide spiritual, professional and personal assistance to the local, low-income Spanish-speaking community.

### **Fun Fact Question:**

What does “*Porque usted no está solo*” mean in English?

When Melisa Taylor, originally from a large city in Panama, moved to rural Harrison County, Indiana, in 1996, she didn’t see many fellow Hispanics. Recently, noting the increasing number of people from Mexico, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, and elsewhere, she and two other Spanish speakers founded Hogar Latino. The program at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in Corydon was co-founded by Sandra Abreu and Scott Robertson to address the spiritual, professional and personal needs of the local low-income Spanish-speaking community. Taylor stressed that clients do not have to be Catholic to receive Hogar Latino’s services.

Taylor said that the program, which is currently staffed by volunteers on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and by phone, is providing services in the following ways:

**Spiritual** – They are starting a praying group, offering a spiritual orientation. Taylor summed this as “God leading the organization.”

**Professional** – Here Hogar Latino works on legal issues, such as translation, legal counseling and immigration questions, and on finance, such as advice on bank accounts, job, school and housing opportunities, and taxes.

**Personal** – Volunteers not only translate documents, but they also accompany clients as translators and advocates with police, landlords, schools, doctors, etc. They also provide information and advice in Spanish about day-to-day issues.

Hogar Latino, which is located at and backed by St. Joseph’s Catholic Church, also receives funds from St. Joseph’s picnic, St. Vincent de Paul, church and community donations and by their own Latinmania festival fundraiser. Taylor stressed that they do not wish to compete with other local organizations, such as Madera Ministries, who are providing counseling and also English as Second Language tutoring at home and school, and they are eager to work together to provide services to the local Hispanic community. She expressed enthusiasm for promoting World on the Square and other similar activities.

During questions at the end of her presentation, Melisa Taylor was asked if as a Hispanic herself she had been discriminated against. She said she had, but that she doesn’t feel it any more. She described how disoriented people can feel because of the language barrier. Taylor also explained that sometimes a Hispanic trying to navigate the system by himself will be treated differently than if he has a local person with him. This is one of the reasons why Hogar Latino’s volunteers sometimes accompany their clients to meetings, court hearings and other appointments. It is also exemplified in their slogan: “*Porque usted no está solo*”

### **Fun Fact Answer:**

This is the slogan for Hogar Latino’s services and it means “Because you are not alone.”

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