

## **Testimony**

Francisco Ortiz, JUNTA for Progressive Action Board Member and New Haven Resident

After 40 years in the New Haven community, JUNTA for Progressive Action is more than a social service agency. Residents of the community look to JUNTA for empowerment, a way to a better their life for themselves and for their family.

**Who we serve:** 4,500 community residents in 2008

Our client demographic: 85% Latino  
12% African-American  
2% White/Caucasian  
1% other

As Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic group in Connecticut, it is important that we continue to offer services and programs that encourage empowerment, self-advocacy and integration into American society. Residents look to JUNTA as comfortable avenue to request very personal assistance with bills, food, guidance, homeless assistance, and even domestic violence issues. Because 90% of our staff is fully bilingual, we are able to offer level of assistance not found at other mainstream agencies. In fact, some state, municipal and local agencies refer Hispanic clients to JUNTA to provide the one-on-one assistance that these agencies do not have the capacity to offer.

### **Education**

In the neighborhood of Fair Haven where JUNTA is located, 42% of the population is without a high school diploma. Through our Adult Education programs we are able to change that. Within the last two years, the program's bilingual GED and ESL courses have graduated approximately 1,200 students.

### **Public Safety**

As a public safety officer, I know the impact of organizations that make a difference in the community. The after-school program, *The Neighborhood Place* keeps over 90 area youth per year engaged in positive arts and athletics activities, keeping them off the streets and preventing them from becoming victim to negative influences such as crime and drugs.

If the state cuts JUNTA's DSS funding by 100% as the Governor has proposed, JUNTA will be unable to continue its work to empower the community and offer basic services that are essential in this extremely tough economic climate. We ask for your support in continuing the state's funding to JUNTA and to the community.