

**Public Safety  
Program Excellence  
Award in Memory of  
William H. Hansell, Sr.,  
and Alice Hansell**

POPULATIONS GREATER THAN 50,000



**WILLIAM B. HORNE**

*The 2003 Public Safety Program Excellence Award in the greater-than-50,000 population category goes to the city of Clearwater, Florida, and City Manager William B. Horne for Operacion Apoyo Hispano (Operation Hispanic Outreach).*

According to the 2000 Census, the Hispanic or Latino population of the city of Clearwater, Florida (pop. 109,000), comprises 9 percent of the total population, up from 3 percent just ten years ago. With this surge in the Hispanic population, the Clearwater police department faced a challenge. Recognizing that the language barrier and recent immigrants' traditional fear of police could leave the city's Hispanic population without access to law enforcement and social services, the department decided to apply a problem-solving approach.

Clearwater already had in place a Hispanic Task Force, which brought together government, social service and community organizations, and

residents to deal with the needs and concerns of the city's growing Hispanic population. The police department played an important role in creating the task force and continued to build bridges to the Hispanic community through focus groups and one-on-one meetings with community leaders. In June 2000, government officials from Hidalgo, Mexico (where many of Clearwater's Hispanic families originated), were invited to Clearwater to meet with the police chief and other city officials. Following that meeting, the police chief sent the deputy chief to Hidalgo to experience the culture and politics of the community and to share his insights with the rest of the department upon his return.

The result of this networking and analysis was Operacion Apoyo Hispano, a comprehensive, multifaceted program that began as a joint pilot project sponsored by the police department and the Tampa Bay YWCA. Designed to address everything from crime concerns to social and economic opportunity for Clearwater's Hispanic community, the program included an interpreter program that makes available bilingual police officers and citizens to assist at crime scenes and traffic accidents, a victim advocacy outreach program, and a domestic violence component structured specifically for non-English-speaking residents and families. The city drew on several sources of federal funding to help support the program.

Early on, the police department began to look for a suitable building that could serve as a central, "one-stop" facility for all the critical services required by the Hispanic community. When police administrators learned of the availability of a building adjacent to the main police station, they immediately went to work persuading the city's manager, attorney, and real estate staff to acquire it. With the approval of the city commission, the new Hispanic Outreach Center opened its doors on November 21, 2002.

The Hispanic Outreach Center offers all the services that were provided through Operation Apoyo Hispano, but with the YWCA's proactive development and fundraising component, it expanded its offerings to include bilingual child care, health, and nutrition education services and ESOL and Spanish language classes. The Center also houses a multipurpose training/meeting room and office space for the police department's Hispanic outreach officer, the Mexican consulate, and a representative of the government of Hidalgo.

As a result of the city's outreach to the Hispanic community, the police department and other city staff have come to appreciate the cultural differences that exist between longtime residents and the city's new Hispanic immigrants. In any community, such understanding is the first and most critical step toward building trust and growing social capital. ■



Clearwater Sergeant Gregory Stewart and "Officer Barkley" entertain young city residents.