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## Horizon Science Academy of Lorain celebrates Hispanic heritage

**Kevin Martin**

*The Morning Journal*

Horizon Science Academy of Lorain celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with an evening of food, music and dance Oct. 18.

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated each year between Sept. 15 and Oct. 15 in recognizing the history, culture and contributions of Hispanic Americans.

Initiated in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon B. Johnson, the celebration was expanded to a full month in 1988.

“One of the reasons that we put on this celebration, is we want to honor the diverse staff and students and our diverse school community that we have here at Horizon Science Academy here in Lorain,” said Assistant Principal Jayson Bendik. “We want to do this to fellowship with one another, to honor the Hispanic culture and the contributions they made, not only to our local community, but worldwide.”

More than 300 parents, students and members of the community attended the celebration.

Christian Omar Medina, a pastor and motivational speaker, spoke and shared his own journey immigrating from Puerto Rico to Cleveland as a child and the lessons learned along the way.

“I had a teacher, who for some reason, she did not like me, and she would have me stand in front of the class and she would have me read from this book knowing that I did not know any English and knowing that I would stutter,” Medina said. “And then she would laugh at me and the whole class would laugh at me and the teacher would say, ‘I don’t know why your parents are wasting your time sending you to school. Nobody’s ever going to hear what you have to say. You’re never going to be anything in life.’”

After becoming one of the first in his



Horizon guests were treated to multiple performances by Esencia Boricua Cultural de Lorain. Their performance lifted the spirits and energy in the crowd while honoring Hispanic Cultures.

family to graduate from college, Medina said he made a point of tracking down his former teacher, telling her that she was wrong.

An ordained minister since 1997, Medina is a case manager and job readiness instructor with Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland.

In addition, he is an activist and community organizer and is the founder of the United Hispanic Pastors Fraternity.

“I’m telling you this story because it’s important for you to know that your future and your destiny is in your hands,” Medina said. “Do not allow anyone to dictate to you what you can and cannot do. Whatever you want to accomplish in your life, is in your hands.”

Noting the growth of Ohio’s Hispanic population, presently accounting for nearly four percent of the population

and accounting for \$3 billion in revenue through the more than 16,000 Hispanic-owned businesses, Medina encouraged people to be proud of their Hispanic heritage.

“So, without a doubt, we’re making a huge contribution to the state of Ohio,” he said. “So, we have a great future ahead of us. There is no better time to be of Latino descent here in Ohio.

“Because of those things, sometimes some people may feel threatened by our potential. So, it’s important for you to be proud of who you are; be proud of your heritage; be proud of your language; be proud of who you are.”

Guests also were treated to performances by Esencia Boricua Cultural de Lorain, Azucar and from students Nathan Witnik, Gina Burgos and Lanichal Meade.