

**For Immediate Release**

## **Foundation to offer scholarships to Hispanic students**

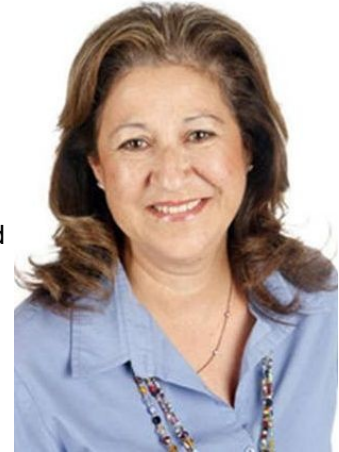
Following what leaders called a successful first year managing scholarships for Hispanics, the Kansas Hispanic Education & Development Foundation next month plans to reach out to area high schools, asking students to apply for spring awards.

Foundation president Yolanda Camarena said the organization is looking forward to its second year handling the scholarships and will continue working to increase funding sources. The nonprofit arm of the Wichita Hispanic Chamber of Commerce — founded in 2007 to help raise money for the awards — took over the chamber's scholarship program last year.

Since 2011, the foundation has more than doubled the dollars and awards given to local students, Camarena said. In October and November, the board plans to contact local high schools, seeking applicants for its 2013 scholarship season.

"Most of these students who apply and receive our scholarships come with obstacles in their lives — be it financial obstacles" or citizenship and immigration issues that keep them from gaining federal financial aid for college, she said.

"Education for our community is really the great equalizer." Yolanda Camarena named new president of the Kansas Hispanic Education & Development Foundation. (September 18, 2012) Jaime Green/The Wichita Eagle



*Yolanda Camarena named  
new president of the  
Kansas Hispanic Education  
& Development Foundation  
September 2012.*

In May, the foundation awarded 39 scholarships totaling \$46,565 to seniors, from Wichita's public and private high schools. In 2011, the foundation gave away just 15. Scholarships are funded or donated by individual and corporate sponsors and area schools.

Qualified scholarship applicants should be high school seniors of at least 50 percent Hispanic heritage in Wichita's public or private schools.

The next submission deadline will be in January. Awards will range from \$500 to \$1,000.

The scholarship program and other education-based initiatives are blossoming under Camarena's leadership, said Charles Rivera, who started the Foundation to impact the education and leadership opportunities of Kansas' Hispanic population. Camarena, a Wichita State University alumna and Harvard University graduate, joined the Foundation's board a year before taking over its presidency in January 2011. She also serves on the Board of Trustees for Butler Community College Foundation and is a member of the Wichita Community Foundation grants committee, she said.

"She's a finisher," Rivera said of Camarena, who owns La Raza Pizza Inc. with her husband, Gene Camarena, a Pizza Hut and Marriott franchisee. "... She's good at bringing people together. And she has very little tolerance for nonperformers."

Camarena said she hopes the foundation's work will encourage Hispanics to seek post-secondary schooling and reduce the high school dropout rates in the ethnic group. Nationwide, 15.1 percent of Hispanics ages 16 to 24 discontinued their high school education in 2010, according to the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. In Sedgwick County, 6.2 percent of Hispanics in 7th through 12th grades dropped out, 2010 figures from the Kansas State Department of Education show. "The foundation is addressing the need in the community to ... prepare Hispanic students for college," she said.

"We have to have a population that is educated so that we have an educated workforce."

