



Martin Delgado reads the Voces de la Frontera newspaper

Latino Media Outlets on the Rise in Milwaukee

By Marti Mikkelson

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Milwaukee County's Latino population has grown nearly 35-percent since 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The increase has sparked a growth in media outlets that cater to the Latino community. WUWM's Marti Mikkelson reports on a couple relatively new media services designed to keep Spanish-speaking residents informed this election season.



WJTI radio announcer Mayra Diaz

It's the middle of August and the immigration reform group Voces de la Frontera has just published its monthly newspaper. The front page is decked out in bright colors, inviting readers to march in the upcoming Labor Day rally in downtown Milwaukee. Today, group members are handing out copies of the paper to shoppers at the El Rey grocery store on 16th St, in the heart of the Latino community.

"You going to come to our march? The first hundred days, just immigration reform in Milwaukee?"

Martin Delgado takes a copy of the newspaper and sits on a nearby chair to read it.

"Si, para enforma y que enforma a todos los Latinos..."

Delgado tells me he's become a regular reader of the newspaper since he moved here in May, and views it as an important source of information in the Latino community.

After speaking with Delgado, we crossed the street. That's where Alicia Perron is selling sno-cones from a cart. One group member hands her a copy of the paper. Perron tells me she uses it to find out what's going on in Milwaukee's Latino community.

"Yo creo que si tenemos informacion porque otro vez en la noticias o con ustedes..."

Perron says she'd like more information on the presidential candidates so she can decide which one best represents Latino interests. Writer of the paper Christine Neumann-Ortiz says that's one reason Voces de la Frontera decided to begin publishing a newspaper last summer. She says the group found many people in the Latino community don't have enough information, and therefore don't go to the polls.

"We started doing get out the vote activities since 2004 and we've been involved in that 2004, 2006, this year, and we have seen, and this has been backed up by national studies, the reason that you have such a low voter turnout is that it's still a community that is fairly new to the voting process. You know, there's kind of a habit that needs to be created and people are a little bit removed from the process," Neumann-Ortiz says.

Neumann-Ortiz says the paper provides the Latino community with candidates' positions on issues, along with details on where to vote and how to register. She says the group distributes 15,000 copies of the paper each month, and believes it has brought more people to its voter registration drives.

Another source of information for the Latino population is a new Spanish speaking radio station that signed on the air last summer, WJTI-AM. Its studios are located in the Esperanza Unida building on the near south side. A handful of local announcers preside over the music and programming. President John Torres says the station fills a void in the Latino community.

“We’re more than just a jukebox radio station. We have hourly newscasts provided by CNN Espanol. We also have local news in the morning following our CNN,” Torres says.

At the time I was interviewing Torres, the station was airing a syndicated program called “Doctor’s Appointment.” Torres says the call-in show answers questions about health care issues in the Latino community. But he says as we head into fall, the station will engage in political discussions.

“We believe that it would be very important to provide a flow of information regarding the candidates running for President and for local offices, so in the past, we’ve invited local candidates to appear and we expect that as we approach the November election, we’ll have experts or supporters from each camp on our airwaves to again provide the information that people need to make the right choices,” Torres says.

Torres says by the end of the year, the station hopes to launch a weekly program dealing with legal issues. He says the station is talking with several local law firms to get attorneys signed on to the program.

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