



Abriendo Caminos

Abriendo Caminos (Finding our Path), is a partnership between West Marin agencies and the local Latino community to engage and empower, while addressing the cultural divide and working toward the goal of being one community.

For over 30 years, dedicated agencies and individuals have accomplished much in bringing the local Latino population, often isolated on rural ranches, out of the shadows. The bridges built through these efforts, as well as the collaboration and respect on all sides, resulted in *Abriendo Caminos*, a model program unique to West Marin.

An important first step, empowerment trainings, imbued the Latino participants with a strong sense of self-respect, a realization of the courage it takes to emigrate, and a deeper connection to each other's experiences. The Anglo community prepared wonderful dinners for the workshops, showing support and establishing their stake in the process; the Latinos declared, "It feels special to have the Anglos cooking for us!"

Participants shared tears and laughter and a deep bond through the pain and celebration of their stories. All agreed that they want to move toward a goal of one community and are eager for new, more active roles. They will be exploring the qualities of leadership through internal discussion, and work on key issues they have identified: labor rights, housing, economic opportunities, and immigration. Their goal is to engage more fully, including in local governance systems and non-profit agencies.

"Abriendo Caminos me fortalece personalmente, me da armas para enfrentar los problemas en mi trabajo y en la comunidad".

"Abriendo Caminos gives me strength, and gives me the tools to solve problems at work and in my community." Miguel Martinez, Sr.

"En Abriendo Caminos he aprendido a valorar este país y el esfuerzo que nuestros compañeros han hecho para subsistir en este país".

"I have learned to appreciate this country and the effort that my compatriots have made to continue in this country." Maricela Garcia