

## **THE KANSAS COALITION FOR EQUITY AND ACCESS TO TRANSITION SERVICES** *Now Accepting Nominations for the 2014-2015 Leadership Awards*

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For Immediate Release

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### **Winners Announced for Kansas Equity and Access Leadership Awards**

Manhattan, KS – Today the Kansas Coalition for Equity and Access to Transition Services (KCEATS) announced two winners of the 2013-2014 Kansas Equity and Access Leadership Awards: Familias Unidas (Families Together, Inc.) of Garden City, Kansas, and the Kansas Council of the League of Latin American Citizens (Kansas-LULAC). “I want to thank the distinguished members of this year’s awards panel for giving serious consideration to all the nominees, and building a consensus around these two great organizations which do so much to support and inspire culturally diverse Kansas youth to meet the challenges of making successful transitions from high school to college, vocations, and life as responsible, contributing members of our Kansas communities,” said Dr. Robert Bruce Scott, KCEATS director.

Familias Unidas is an outreach program of the Garden City office of Families Together, Inc., a state-wide advocacy group, founded in 1982, which offers free assistance and training to parents and families of individuals ages 0 to 26 with special needs. Because 68% of the students enrolled, K-12, in Garden City USD 457 schools are of Hispanic/Latino origin, and a language other than English is spoken in 40% of Garden City homes, the Spanish-language services provided by Familias Unidas empower families to understand the opportunities available for their sons and daughters in the school community. Earlier this spring, on February 28, 2013, Familias Unidas presented a four-hour Spanish-language workshop to explain to parents the entire transition process under federal special education law (IDEA), including self-determination from a Latino perspective and preparation for successful post-secondary outcomes for their children. “I attended that workshop,” explained Scott, “and I was happy to report to our awards panel that Familias Unidas really covered the key aspects of transition and engaged parents in worthwhile discussions, answering all questions with accurate information.” The Program Director at the Families Together Garden City site is Tami Schwindt. Parent Information Specialists are Laurie Gerber and Teresa Beaudry. Parent Health Care Specialist is Marina Hernandez. Bilingual Parent Information Specialist is Yolanda Corral. Parent Trainer and English-to-Spanish Translator is Steve Sitz. And Nora Ortiz is the Bilingual Secretary for Familias Unidas.

Because there were such strong nominees this year, the KCEATS panel decided to name a second winner, Kansas-LULAC, whose Executive Director is Elias Garcia. “It is impossible not to notice the positive difference that Elias Garcia and LULAC have made in the lives of Kansas young people through their tireless advocacy,” said Scott. This year once again there were strong anti-immigrant forces trying to rescind the 2004 law that recognized immigrant youth who had completed at least three years of schooling and graduated from a Kansas high

school, treating them as Kansas residents for in-state tuition privileges at Kansas colleges, universities, community colleges, and vocational programs. “Elias Garcia spoke eloquently on behalf of maintaining this important law in effect,” explained Scott. “His support was instrumental in keeping alive this tuition option that provides an opportunity for culturally diverse young people to receive an education so that they can contribute to Kansas as workers and ultimately citizens.” According to its web site, LULAC “is the largest Latino civil rights group in the United States... and looks to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans from every region looking for freedom and an honest way of life.”

Both Familias Unidas and Kansas-LULAC will be presented with certificates to honor their achievements on behalf of the transition experiences of multicultural Kansas youth. The panel of judges for this year’s Kansas Equity and Access Leadership Awards included business entrepreneurs, international scholars, and administrators from school systems and research centers. For more information about KCEATS or the KCEATS leadership awards, please contact 785-236-8158 or [kceatsawards@eslminiconf.net](mailto:kceatsawards@eslminiconf.net).

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