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Washington County Hosts First-Ever Roundtable with Local Latino and Hispanic Business Owners to Recognize National Hispanic Heritage Month and Address Challenges, Connect Resources

West Bend, WI – In an effort to reach out to Latinos and Hispanics during National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15) and understand the challenges facing this community, Washington County Executive Josh Schoemann arranged the first-ever roundtable with 11 area business owners at Casa Guadalupe on Tuesday, October 12. According to the last Census, there are approximately 4,400 individuals in Washington County who identify as Hispanic or Latino.

“From listening to the business owners, I wasn’t surprised to learn that the primary barrier to keeping their businesses profitable is employee shortages,” said County Executive Josh Schoemann.

Schoemann added, “The government and enhanced unemployment handouts aren’t the answer. Now that the deadline to receive federal extended unemployment benefits ended September 4, we need to work together and hit the problem straight on by creating incentives and opportunities to attract employees and keep them here.”

In addition to the workforce issue, the group also discussed barriers to business ownership, including computer skills, sound business practices, as well as how the county can connect their needs to Washington County’s opportunities.

Roundtable participants included Lily Alvarado, program manager for bilingual education programming and outreach at Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC) in Milwaukee, Peter Snyder, associate dean of adult education at Moraine Park Technical College in West Bend, and Noelle Braun, executive director at Casa Guadalupe Education Center.

“Casa Guadalupe is so appreciative to County Executive Schoemann's office for reaching out and providing this opportunity to bring local Latino business owners to the table and listen to them share their successes, challenges, and dreams related to their businesses,” said Noelle Braun, executive director at Casa Guadalupe. “We look forward to continuing collaboration with the county and WWBIC to offer further sustained conversations, support, and resources for local Latino businesses, which add value and help strengthen our community.”

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