

ALPFA PRESIDENT **MANNY ESPINOZA**

BY MICHAEL CHIN & JOSEFINA BONILLA-RUIZ

Since Manny Espinoza took over as national president of the Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting (ALPFA) in 1999, the organization has grown from a small, niche group into the 8,500 member, nationally recognized and influential society it is today.

For 15 years, Espinoza was a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), where he also served on their Diversity Champion Task Group and received the prestigious Eagle Award for his dedication to leadership and diversity issues.

Color Magazine: Can you first talk a little bit about yourself and your work with ALPFA?

Manny Espinoza: I have been in the accounting finance business for over 30 years. I became involved with ALPFA in 1994 mainly through my role on the diversity task force of Coopers. I used to be a keynote speaker at the conventions and I was very impressed with the potential of the organization. I became president elect of the organization in 1999. At that time, the mission and the make up of the membership was different. So we took a new look at what we really wanted ALPFA to be. It was called the American Association of Hispanic CPAs (certified public accountants), so there were a lot of accountants, even Latino accountants, that were not allowed to be members of the organization. I felt that the outlook could be much more. In 1999, we had about 225 paid members and now we're up to 8500 members. Our budget back then was \$100,000 and now our budget is \$5 million. A lot of it had to do with broadening the organization.

CM: What other programs does ALPFA offer?

ME: The mission of ALPFA is really to build leadership. It is a mission that whether you're in accounting or finance it applies to everybody. ALPFA has developed significant programs to do this, like the Women of ALPFA, ALPFA Law and our power breakfasts that deal with executive management people of



10 years plus. We also have our student internship program, that we're launching this year. All of our programs are going to have long-term, positive effects on our members and our communities.

In addition to that, I wanted to mention that we are an inclusive group. There's no doubt that our core competency is Latinos. If you want to hang around with a lot of talented Latino students and professionals, you hang around with ALPFA. But we're an inclusive group and you can see that in our corporate advisory board. Of the fifteen members on our advisory board five are Latino and the rest come from various other cultures. So we believe in the multicultural concept, and in the future I think you may see that expanding even more.

CM: How has ALPFA Boston set itself apart?

ME: Fortunately, our organization is growing and having successes all over the country. But in Boston it has just been a home run. We've become one of the most well recognized organizations in the city. We've had great leadership here, from our current president Yvonne Garcia, to Juan Carlos Morales

our first national president. (ALPFA) Boston has only been around since 2001, and it has grown to be the largest chapter in the country. I mean to think about being larger than New York or Los Angeles or Miami or Chicago where you think there would be a critical mass of Latinos - Boston has really stepped up to the plate and surpassed all of those chapters. And in 2009 they are going to be rewarded by having the convention in Boston.

CM: What can we look forward to at the convention?

ME: Over the last two years we have had about 2,500 attendees at the convention. In Boston we expect to draw around three, maybe four thousand attendees. We want to take advantage of the fact that Boston has a lot of universities and community colleges and bring a lot to the students. Give them networking, scholarship and job opportunities. Our membership is made up of 50 percent students and 50 percent professionals, so when we come in and bring the convention it impacts both levels in that community. It really motivates, getting professionals excited about what they are doing in the company and in the communities. And it gives students opportunities they would never have.

CM: How have you created such a large organization with so many different programs with a mostly volunteer group of people?

ME: Our staff has grown significantly over the last year or so but, two years ago we only had four people including myself. I think our total employees now is about 16 or 17. But our management structure is about 350 people who are mostly volunteers. Everyone on our board of directors is a volunteer but they have a passion to do this. They really do put in a significant amount of hours, hold ALPFA together, and really implement our mission. We are very fortunate to have leaders across the country that are willing to do this for free. It has been extremely successful because of a passionate volunteer base.

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Yvonne Garcia is the president of ALPFA Boston and incoming ALPFA national vice president. She is also a vice president of China Construction Bank Strategic Alliance group at Bank of America (BoA) and co-president of the company's Hispanic/Latino affinity group. Under her supervision ALPFA Boston has become the largest chapter in the country. As a result of her outstanding work as a change agent, she is regarded as one of the most important and influential leaders in the community. She recently received the Promise of Greatness Leadership Award from the Partnership, Inc. and was named to the Boston Business Journal's 40 Under 40 List.

What is your objective as president of ALPFA?

As president my role is to provide leadership to a supercharged, passionate board of leaders and collaborative team who believe, as I do, in the importance of providing opportunities that include educational programs and creating a rich network for our members, partners and the community. I want people to embrace the idea of diversity by recognizing that we are be-

yond the question of why diversity is important and that we need to position ourselves to embrace and leverage the transformative phase of inclusiveness - of racial diversity, diversity of thought and diversity of religion. By doing so, we will all be at an advantage in the workplace and our communities.

What has made ALPFA Boston so successful?

I realize there is a real need in the city for what we provide. We have been able to add quality members and introduce several programs that have been key to our success, including a robust mentoring program. However, the key driver of our success is the talented and passionate leadership team that comprises ALPFA Boston.

What would you say to professionals who want to get involved?

Attend our monthly events in order to experience the value ALPFA will bring to their professional and personal lives. By attending our events they will learn from distinguished industry speakers and get to network with professionals who have similar career interests and goals. Students and young professionals will get a chance to build their networks and connect with top professionals as well. Likewise, industry leaders will get a chance to mentor and have access to some of the top talent in the area.