Muy Bien

California’s Bienestar celebrates 20 years of serving the Latino community.

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In August, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger slashed $82 million in state AIDS funding, which eliminated vital financial resources for AIDS service organizations across the Golden State. One of the groups still reeling from those cuts is Bienestar (the name means “well-being”), which lost $365,000 in HIV prevention programs and $345,000 in HIV treatment, education and adherence funding.

While the governator is casting aside critical AIDS funding, Bienestar isn’t ready to say “hasta la vista, baby” to the fight just yet.

Its president and CEO, Oscar De La O, told *POZ* that the nonprofit will continue targeting HIV/AIDS among Latinos, a group that, in 2006, represented about 15 percent of the U.S. population and its territories but accounted for 18 percent of new HIV/AIDS cases. HIV outreach in this community is often blocked by misperception and silence.

In response, Bienestar is using social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace to connect Latinos to HIV services. “[Our campaigns include] major Latino celebrities with messages addressing stigma, HIV testing and homophobia,” De La O says. “We are hoping to enhance these efforts by enlisting public and elected officials, celebrities and community leaders to speak out more on the connection between HIV/AIDS and social and economic justice.”

For more information, visit bienestar.org.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/Bienestar-HIV-funding-17563-9365