

COMMUNITY
ACTION AGENCY
OF SOMERVILLE

67-70 UNION
SQUARE, #104
SOMERVILLE, MA
02143

Special points of interest:

- CAAS Word search
- Fun Somerville Facts
- Test your knowledge of Somerville with a quiz
- Ask a High School Student Advice Column

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Jovenes Latinos' Voice

Volume I, Issue I

Spring 2007

History of CAAS Latino Youth Program in Somerville

The Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS), a community non-profit organization incorporated in 1981, is the legally designated anti-poverty agency for Somerville. The mission of CAAS is to reduce poverty among local families and individuals while working to counteract, and whenever possible eliminate, the societal conditions that cause and perpetuate poverty.

Jovenes Latinos, the Youth Peer Leadership Program at CAAS, is the only program in Somerville that focuses on serving Latino Teens. Ismael Vasquez, the program's Director, organized *Jovenes Latinos* in 1992 and has met with this group weekly since its inception. A leader in the Somerville Latino community, Mr. Vasquez played an active role in organizing Latinos, including focus with youth. He also works to improve the conditions for Latino

students in the Somerville Public Schools and participates in many other task forces to support better access for high education and equality opportunity for our

Latino Students. In the past years the group has targeted teen pregnancy, tobacco prevention, HIV/AIDS, and environmental justice.

The teens who participate in *Jovenes Latinos* responsibility, respect, communication skills, conflict resolution, goal setting and decision making, in a culturally appropriate manner, so that the teens can become leaders



among their peers. Our teens go on to help to educate and empower other teens and adults to make positive choices through meetings, presentations, trainings, workshops, conferences, campaigns and other community events. *Jovenes Latinos* also work in collaboration with other Peer Leadership Youth Prevention and educational programs.

Somerville Quiz!

By: Roberto Barillas

1. How many people live in Somerville? (Population)
2. Where is Somerville located? (type of county)
3. How many miles is Somerville from Boston and in which direction is Somerville from Boston?
4. What is the fraction of immigrants living in Somerville?
5. What are the names of the five squares in Somerville?
6. What type of national recognition has Somerville recently won?
7. In your own words, what do you think of Somerville?

Find the answers inside!

Safety in the Somerville community

By Roberto Barillas

Somerville has changed over the years. In my opinion, violence has increased a bit these days. I have been in fights and I have seen fights happen. Drugs have become more common than during earlier times because teenagers think it's cool. People use firearms for the wrong reasons such as shooting other people for revenge and hatred. Maybe there is more drug abuse because teenagers are curious or they just want to be cool. I just can't stand kids doing drugs just to be cool, it's just stupid. I have experience with fights. I fought some kid and then I got a detention because of it. It is important that the Somerville community works together to be safe for everyone.

On February 21, I interviewed a very kind woman named Bernadette Sullivan. She works in the Somerville police department as an attorney. I asked her

some questions that had to do with Somerville and the safety in the community. Here are some of the questions and answers:

1. Question: Do you think that drugs abuse is out of control these days?

Answer: "Work needs to be done on it. It's not really out of control."

2. Question: Is teen violence a big problem?

Answer: "Yes it is a big problem."

3. Question: Do you think that people are using firearms for the wrong reason?

Answer: "Depends how many firearms are out there?"

4. Question: What would you do to prevent teen violence in the community?

Answer: "Put programs in place like sports, community

service, and leadership kills."

5. Question: How would you try to stop drug abuse?

Answer: "Focus teens on other things."

6. Question: How does seeing teen violence make you feel when you go to visit a school?

Answer: "Teens should understand that something can be done without resorting to violence. Violence should be used only as a last resort."

7. Question: How many Latinos are working in the Somerville Police Department?

Answer: "About three."

Those are the questions I asked Bernadette Sullivan. She was cooperative and very patient—not in a rush like other people I talk to.



"Teens should understand that something can be done without resorting to violence."

Child Labor Laws

By Emelyn Guevara

In the early 1900's child labor was widespread and unregulated. Since then, the introduction of US Child Labor Laws has helped the numbers decline. Actually, the state of Massachusetts enacted the first statewide child labor law in 1836. It wasn't really that great because the requirement for a child under 15 was just to go to school for at least three months a year. But, throughout the years the laws changed and made it what it is today, with strict requirements nationally and in each state. Since January 3, 2007, there was a New Child Labor Law Reform. Many

laws were changed and were amended. That doesn't mean that the current child labor laws are in perfect condition. People still violate the laws and take advantage of youth today, knowing that youth are not informed about their rights. Sometimes the employer doesn't know the rights of the youth. The youth that are not informed can't stand up for themselves if any problems were happening in their job. They sometimes don't know they can get hurt both through physical injury and overall health. A new Child Labor Law Task force

in our area is made up of youth, parents, community groups, young workers, safety experts, and government agencies. They help keep youth workers healthy and safe. They inform the community and make sure the laws are being improved and enforced. Jovenes Latinos are involved with the Task Force (MASSCOSH) which is trying to advertise and inform the community for youth and adults in Massachusetts. We give advice and help as a youth's point of view. Child Labor laws affect 14- 18 years old and are a big conflict, but Jovenes Latinos are helping to improve it.

El Salvador, continued from page 2

government signed a peace treaty with the guerrilla forces, officially ending the 12-year civil war that had killed 75,000. The civil war in El Salvador affected the lives of many innocent people. Although many may know the technical part of the war, there is much to be learned about the personal experiences of those who lived it on a daily basis. I myself, being the daughter of two immigrants, know the hardships that my parents faced and their struggle to come to the United States to save their own lives, and the lives of my brother and sister. My mother, Dolores Pena, shares, "La Guerilla, or the rebels, were in constant confrontation with the government soldiers. Neither side cared what they did, or how their actions affected the people. Repeatedly, la Guerilla and the government soldiers, without reason, took entire families and just killed them. It didn't matter whether they were kids, or not. To take revenge, the families of the victims would fight with the opposing side in which killed their loved ones. Regularly, spiteful individuals

"All I could think about was that I was going to die and my son and daughter were going to be left alone."

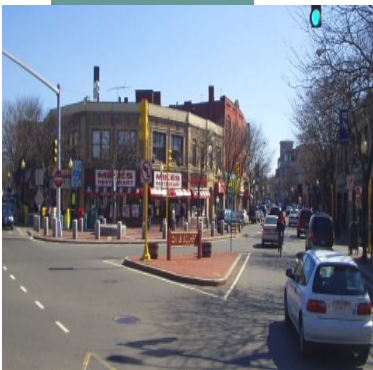
would tell either the Guerilla or the government soldiers that a certain person was against them, and fighting for the other side. When this happened, the side in which the individual went to go tell would come and kill the person." These experiences would happen generally, to any innocent bystander that by some chance was there at the wrong place and at the wrong time.

The civil war affected the life of my parents in a particular way, as it did too many. My mother explains, "When I was pregnant with Yessenia, a plane began to drop bombs close to my house. By a miracle, I didn't have a miscarriage, but it was close to one." Thinking about my sister not being with me today is something difficult for me to cope with, since she is someone so important in my life. On another occasion, a bullet almost hit my sister in the face, when crossfire occurred out of no where. A certain event that is unforgettable to my mother is one in which she was near her house, in the river. She remembers, "When I went to go swim in the river to cool off from the intensity of the heat a

shooting began between la Guerilla and the government soldiers. I could feel the bullets flying close to me. All I could think about was that I was going to die and my son and daughter were going to be left alone. I got my stuff from the river and began to walk back to the house, but really wanting to run. I knew that if I ran they would shoot at me and kill me so I walked in fear."

The civil war in El Salvador was an intense one. It corrupted the lives of many, and ended many more. The mental and physical damage that it did to many people was unbelievable. I myself could not imagine being put in that situation, and being able to live with it for so long. The men, women, and children who suffered and lived through this war were courageous, strong, and admirable individuals in my point of view.

This story is told in the viewpoint of my mother. When you think about it, there are so many other people that have life stories similar to that of my mom—many times, stories untold.



**Davis Square,
Somerville,
MA**

By Jennifer Escobar

For a very long time, people and laws of the United States have discriminated against newcomers, also called "immigrants" that have just arrived at the

United States to get a better life. Why are immigrants discriminated against? Well, for numerous reasons such as: taking up space, taking jobs, etc. But what kind of jobs are immigrants taking? None other than the only jobs available to them – the ones that nobody else wants.

I live in the city of Somerville, a very diverse city where people from many

Discrimination in Somerville

backgrounds are living. Races such as: Blacks, Latinos, Whites, etc., interact with each other on a daily basis.

Immigrants in the United States have been discriminated against throughout history. Not only for being undocumented immigrants, but also just being a child of undocumented immigrants, makes you a second generation of immigration too.

Maria Escobar immigrated to the United States from El Salvador when she was only 19 years old to get a better life and to be able to support her 2 children who were in El Salvador at the time in care of their grandmother. Like other of millions of immigrants, Maria didn't

know any English when she first arrived to the United States.

Rene Tejada also immigrated to the United States from El Salvador when he was just 21 years old to get a better life. Like Maria, he didn't know any English when he first arrived at the United States.

These two people struggled very hard to make their lives better in the United States. They are now proud residents of the United States. Unfortunately, they still get labeled as "illegal" like the other thousands of undocumented immigrants living in the United States, trying to live the "American Dream".

Ask-A-High School Student Advice Column

By Estefani Tejada

Dear Ask a High School Student,

Although this might not seem like an OMG to the Zoogole power problem...it is!!! A week ago I was at the mall and saw my ex...he still looked cute. He said hi to me and I did too but I left quickly so I would avoid conversation. I mean I know that I would start to like him again which I didn't want to happen... he's my ex for a reason. Three days later I run into him at the park and he asked me to go out on a date, I said no that I couldn't and that we could only be friends. Now I am really confused about what I feel and think that I am starting to like him again!! Should I give him another chance??

-Stuck Between the past and Present

Dear Stuck between the Past and Present,

Talk about Déjà vu! Well giving him another chance depends all on you! Why did you break up with him? Was it for a reason that was stupid and pride got the best of you or was it a situation in which he pressured, controlled, or made you feel bad? Like you said, he's an ex for a reason, but does that reason hurt you in anyway or was it a reason that you can forget about and

just move on? Think about it.. Just in case, don't get your hopes up because there is a slim to none a chance that he has or will change. Go get him...if he is truly what you seek.

-Ask a High School Student

Dear Ask a High School Student,

Although this country is said to be full of equality, I have faced something that no 13 year old should face. I was trying to find a job so I could save some money and help my parents with the bills. I proudly can say I am Latino and love my heritage. As I applied for the job I thought that although it would not be much, it would be something. As I walked into the store and handed in my application, a Caucasian woman looked at me, took the application, and said that there were no positions available. I thanked her for her time and left. When she thought I wasn't looking she threw my application away muttering, "I'm not going to hire a Spic, especially a poor Spic." I felt so hurt, what had I ever done to her? I feel as if they rejected me due to my ethnicity...since there was a sign that said Help Wanted... and the way that I was treated!! What should I do?

-Rejected While Being Discriminated

Dear Rejected While Being Discriminated,

You did nothing wrong and what you went through should have never happened! There is no excuse for that person's actions!! Although it is a sad thing to imagine, discrimination still lives on till this day. In this world there are many close-minded people that don't realize that this world is made up of all types of people and although you may be "poor" you are more educated than her!! Let me explain myself. You realize what is going on in the world and that your ethnicity had nothing to do with your job ability... It's the individual person. In your local city you can go to a discrimination organization and report what you have been through. What I want you to realize is that a discrimination case is hard to prove and nothing may come out of it at all. Although this may happen, another factor is that the investigation that is conducted can find her guilty of discrimination, since discrimination due to race is illegal. Although she may not be found guilty of anything you will help her realize that what she is doing is wrong. Your actions will prevent her from doing it again and can save another child that really does not what is going on! Good luck and best of wishes!!



Union Square
Somerville, MA

"I proudly can say I am Latino and love my heritage."



Somerville, MA

Somerville Quiz Answers

1. 77,478 people recent live in Somerville.
2. Middlesex county
3. Somerville is two miles north of Boston.
4. 1/3 of people in Somerville are immigrants.
5. Davis Square, Union Square, Ball Square, Teele Square, and Magoun Square.
6. Somerville recently received national recognition as a model of innovation and efficiency for their 311 customer service helpline and Somers tat, a data-driven style of managing government services.
7. Your own words.

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Find Out more about CAAS!
www.caasomerville.org



Jovenes Latinos

Jovenes Latinos Teen Bios

Estefani N. Tejada is a 15 year old sophomore at Somerville High School. She is a peer leader at CAAS Jovenes Latinos and is determined to help the youth and Immigrant community. Estefani hopes to one day accomplish the dream of becoming a doctor and to give back to the community that she grew up in.

Emelyn I. Guevara is 16 and came from Immigrant parents. She goes to Somerville High School and is in the 10th grade. She is Hispanic and began to work at CAAS last year.

Roberto A. Barillas is a very kind person. He is 14 years old and goes to the Cummings School. Roberto works at CAAS and says that Somerville could be way better than it is now.

Jennifer S. Escobar, 15 and a sophomore at SHS, is a proud Latino Youth Peer Leader at CAAS. She enjoys helping the Somerville immigrant community as much as she can. In the future, Jennifer wants to become a psychologist.

Ismael Vasquez is a native of El Salvador. He has been a resident of the United States for the last twenty four years. He completed his GED, the high school equivalent education at Roxbury Community College and attended the University of Massachusetts, Boston for two years getting a certificate in community development. He has worked at the Community Action Agency of Somerville since 1992 and is currently the Director of the Latino Protection Program, Jovenes Latinos.

Dena Greenblum is a sophomore at Tufts University majoring in International Relations and Community Health. This year she is working with the Immigrant Service Providers' Group on Health as her scholar's project with the Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service.

CAAS Wordsearch

T K S Y J C X P K A Q I U F K
A E Q N A E N F D E M P N T T
N K E U E P N O U M P N D U N
E O G N Z Z O N I D Z K O N E
D J A O E U I G I W X W C V D
X K Q Y M M R T F F A U U K I
H J F A I A P B I H E G M V S
I E R M N T C O S C U R E I E
S G P T H A C O W H U C N X R
E A S D R A C N E E R G T O A
M J A L D S U S K D R U E A V
E B O C S W G Y R V J M D C H
L S K A E S T E F A N I E U N
Y F M L E A M S I B Q Y H N C

CAAS
CARLOS
CITIZENS
DENA
EMELYN
ESTEFANI
GREENCARD
IMMIGRANTS
ISMAEL
JENNIFER

