

Community Partnerships for Adult Learning

Partnership Profiles



Juntos in Holyoke, Massachusetts

Juntos is a six-member partnership that provides adult basic education, adult secondary education, English literacy, college transition, computer and family literacy, and vocational training and job search services to local adults.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN HOLYOKE ...

- **Holyoke Public Schools** serves as lead agency, provides funding and in-kind support to Juntos, and operates the Holyoke Adult Learning Opportunities (HALO) Center.
- **The Community Education Project** offers English literacy, Native Language literacy in Spanish, an ABE-to-College Transition Program, and computer and family literacy classes.
- **The Community Adolescent Resource and Education (Care) Center** offers education, GED preparation classes in English or Spanish, and support services to teenage mothers and their families.
- **Holyoke Community College** provides support for adult learners in making the transition from adult basic education to higher education.
- **The New England Farmworkers Council** provides adult education, English literacy, and workplace skills instruction in Spanish and English.
- **The Massachusetts Career Development Institute** offers adult basic education, English literacy, vocational training, job placement, and counseling services.

AND WHY THEY WORK ...

- **Partners assess community needs on a regular basis.** A systematic community assessment process provides information on adult education needs to the partners.
- **The partnership benefits from the leadership of a carefully chosen advisory council.** The council includes members from a wide range of workforce development and adult education organizations.
- **Forming the partnership has increased access to funds.** The partnership has attracted funds that individual organizations would not have been able to obtain.
- **Each partner has a distinctive role to play.** Partners bring specific expertise, strengths, and community connections to the partnership, enhancing its capabilities and expanding its reach.

INTRODUCTION

In Spanish, “juntos” means “together.” It is the name chosen by a group of programs that share the same goal: providing adults in Holyoke with high-quality adult education free of cost to the learners. The Juntos partners include the public school system’s Holyoke Adult Learning Opportunities Center (HALO), the ABE-to-College Transition and Mentor Program at Holyoke Community College, and four community organizations—the Community Education Project (CEP), the Community Adolescent Resource and Education (Care) Center, the New England Farmworkers Council, and the Massachusetts Career Development Institute (MCDI). Together they offer coordinated, comprehensive courses in adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education, English literacy (EL), workforce development, and family literacy.

The Juntos collaborative serves many adults who are low-income, struggle with speaking English, and “think they can’t make it.” Yet with the help of Juntos’ adult education courses and services such as counseling, mentoring, college and vocational transition assistance, and daycare, these adults are succeeding and finding ways to make their dreams come true.

Betty Falcón’s education journey in Holyoke began in 1991, when she enrolled at CEP to improve her English. She continued her education at Holyoke Community College, served as a mentor in the Mentor Program there, and transferred to Westfield State College, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in sociology. Betty is now back at Holyoke Community College – not as a student, but as the coordinator of the Mentor Program.

Frances Bernier began learning English at CEP at age 18, soon after arriving from Puerto Rico. There she met another student, Tony, whom she would later marry. After completing two cycles of community-based English courses, she enrolled briefly at Holyoke Community College, then left in order to have her children. When she was ready to return to class,

Frances enrolled in the Office Systems Management program offered by MCDI-Holyoke. During her time in the program, Frances served as an office intern at both CEP and Enlace de Familias/Holyoke Family Network, a nearby family center. When Even Start, a new family literacy program, opened in Holyoke, Frances was recruited by the program supervisor to work as the program’s administrative assistant, a job that she loves.

Alex Bejarano is currently majoring in music at Holyoke Community College. He earned his high school diploma in Colombia and then took EL classes at HALO and CEP after arriving in this country. Alex then entered CEP’s college transition program, where he received the assistance he needed to score well enough on HCC’s placement tests to begin taking credit courses. According to Alex, his experience with Juntos helped give him “direction in life. I wanted to go to college, and they helped me. Now I’m studying music, and that’s my American dream.” He continues to benefit from the partnership by receiving assistance with reading and writing from the Mentor Program, and he also serves as a mentor to adult students making the transition from studying in the community to studying at the college.

Minerva Ramos, who received her GED diploma in another state before moving to Holyoke, also serves as a mentor at Holyoke Community College. At first she lacked confidence about being a mentor, but with the encouragement of Juntos and community college staff, she took up the challenge. She serves as a role model for the students she mentors because, like them, she once was an adult basic education learner: “People from other countries are scared to learn English. They fear that they’re too old. I’m there to assure them that they can [be successful]. I feel that what I got from the college, I’m now giving to the community.”



*Minerva Ramos, Betty Falcón,
and Alex Bejarano*

Mentoring also has helped Minerva grow personally and gain more confidence. In fact, recently she led a campaign to lengthen the hours of bus service to and from the community college. She and the other mentors researched the need and presented their plan to the college and the bus company. After winning the support of both, the mentors developed an outreach campaign to alert the other students to the change in hours.

These are just a few examples of how Juntos has helped improve the prospects of many Holyoke residents. Through partnerships, Juntos has created a community environment that fosters lifelong learning. The transition from adult education to higher education and employment is no longer a hurdle adults must overcome alone. They have Juntos to guide them.

BACKGROUND

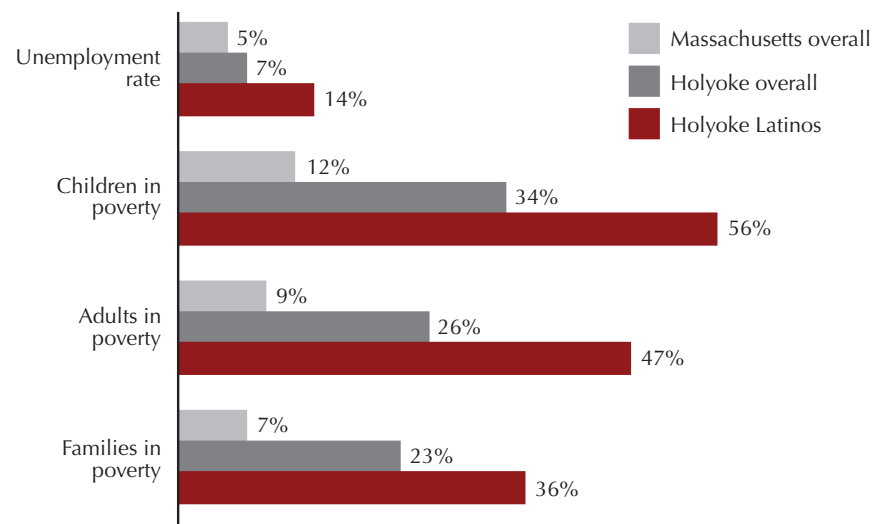
Located in the rolling hills at the foot of the Berkshires, the city of Holyoke encompasses an inner-city center, quiet residential streets, and spacious suburban areas. It sits in the midst of five prestigious colleges and universities, yet almost 23 percent of its population of 40,000 could benefit from adult basic education, adult secondary education, and English language acquisition support. This includes many who need both English literacy and adult basic and secondary instruction.

Once known as the Paper City, Holyoke has undergone a significant transformation since the 1920s. Many of the paper mills that gave the city its nickname have closed their doors. The city has lost about one third of its population since the 1920s, mostly among its white residents. Between 1980 and 2000, the white population decreased by almost 16,000, while the Latino population grew by over 10,000, an increase of 170 percent. During their boom, the mills offered residents with limited English-speak-

ing skills a source of employment. Without the mills, many adults are struggling to earn a living wage.

The statistics are telling. In 2000, 14 percent of Latinos were unemployed and nearly half lived in poverty. In comparison, only 7 percent of the city's overall adult population was unemployed and one-quarter lived in poverty. Almost half of Holyoke's Latino population is under age 18, and many are still learning to speak English. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 43 percent of Holyoke's population aged five and older speaks a language other than English at home, and nearly 20 percent of the same age group speaks English "less than very well."

Percentage of Latinos Living in Poverty and Unemployed, Compared to Holyoke and Massachusetts Overall: 2000



SOURCE: The City of Holyoke, Massachusetts Statement of Adult Basic Education Assets and Needs, Working Draft, January 31, 2003.

Holyoke residents face tough economic circumstances. Over 30 percent of Holyoke's population does not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Estimates show that at least 9,000 Holyoke adults are in need of ABE, EL, or adult secondary education. Yet the service industry, now the dominant employer in the community, often requires higher levels of education. As a result, many Holyoke employers are turning to workers outside the city to fill open positions.

The low education level of Holyoke's adults also is considered one of the reasons the community's children are struggling academically, according to a public school administrator. She pointed out that many parents do not have the necessary literacy skills to support their children's education, and until parents develop these skills, their children will remain at a disadvantage with respect to their performance on the state's standardized tests.

Beginning in 1995, with encouragement from the state, three organizations decided that the best way to address the growing need for adult basic education and English literacy in Holyoke was to coordinate their services and collaborate on, rather than compete for, funding from the Massachusetts Department of Education. These providers, the Holyoke Adult Learning Opportunities (HALO) Center, the Community Education Project (CEP), and the Community Adolescent Resource and Education (Care) Center, formed Juntos. Each organization offers adult education services and each has different characteristics and strengths.

The HALO Center is part of the Holyoke public school system, which provides funding and in-kind support to Juntos and serves as the partnership's lead agency and fiscal sponsor. The Community Education Project, initially funded by Hampshire College and now an independent nonprofit, is primarily Latino in its students, staff, and governance. Also serving mainly Latinos, the Care Center is a nonprofit offering a wide range of education and support services to teenage parents and their families.

The Care Center



According to Ana Rodriguez, education director of the Care Center, "We want to light some fires. We want to engage students' brains, their bodies, their spirits. It's not just about coming here to learn to pass the GED exam. We have made conscious decisions to give our students the chance to own their education, to succeed as students, to move beyond the GED and on to college." These ambitions for Care's students are evident in the Center's curriculum, programs, services, and environment.

Since 1996, the Care Center has served thousands of young women, providing them with education, counseling, support services, and a warm, friendly environment. The Center's decision to provide ABE/GED instruction and college preparation within a liberal arts context is on display everywhere. Visitors are greeted by a large sculpture on the front lawn that integrates castings of student and faculty hands and faces. In the reception area, student poetry covers the walls. The stairwell walls display students' photographs from a photography class offered at the Center by the University of Massachusetts. Pictures of student athletes are posted prominently.

The Center runs the Teen Mother Education and Support Program for young mothers who are working toward their GED diploma. The program includes pre-GED and GED classes in English and Spanish, English literacy, private tutoring, field trips, and elective courses in the humanities, music, art, and athletics. On-site daycare, transportation, student support and counseling, and job placement services are also available. Administrators, teachers, and the career counselor (who is a Care Center graduate) encourage students to pursue higher education.

In addition to the Teen Mother Education and Support Program, the Center offers its students the opportunity to join "Rowing Strong, Rowing Together." Young women who participate in the program learn not only how to row, but also the importance of teamwork. The Care Center has found this program to be a "crucial ingredient" in their students' future success because it helps build their self-esteem and sense of community. Donations, private and government grants, the United Way, and investment revenue fund these and other programs of the Care Center.



The Care Center Sculpture

After receiving the state education department grant, the Juntos partners were directed by the department to join forces with Holyoke Community College. Besides connecting Juntos directly to higher education, the community college brought another asset to the partnership, the Mentor Program. This program helps adult learners make the transition from adult basic education to Holyoke Community College by providing academic preparation, counseling, and the support of a mentor. The program enlists former ABE students who have already successfully moved on to college to serve as mentors and encourages the development of their leadership skills.

During the first collaborative grant cycle, coordinators from each of these four organizations began working together on the mission of the partnership, funding issues, and community planning for adult education services. In 1999, their community planning was advanced by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Education. With this money, Juntos was able to team up with a local nonprofit, Enlace de Familias/Holyoke Family Network, to form the Holyoke ABE Community Planning Partnership and to produce an initial (1999) Adult Basic Education Assets and Needs Statement. (An updated and much more extensive version of this document was developed in 2002-03). The report examined the status of adult education in Holyoke and found, among other things, that more adult education services were needed; too many of the community's adults with low literacy skills were not being reached.

There has been considerable progress since the original partners created Juntos. For example, the partners have doubled the number of classroom places for learners since 1995 (adding 76 new places since 1999); increased the number of classes offered during the evening; and boosted the enrollment of male students from 20 percent in 1998-1999 to 33 percent in 2000-2001. In 2000, Juntos attracted two additional partners, the New England Farmworkers Council and Massachusetts Career Development Institute (MCDI). Both helped to fill gaps in services, specifically, Spanish

pre-GED and evening English literacy instruction. The Farmworkers Council also brought other services to Juntos, such as vouchers for day-care, a close relationship with the local employment center, and computer workshops. MCDI also expanded the range of services Juntos can offer its learners. It offers vocational training in office systems technology and nursing assistance and provides job placement, counseling, and, through a partnership with the University of Massachusetts – Amherst (UMASS), nutritional counseling on site.

THE JUNTOS PARTNERSHIP

As Juntos developed and expanded to include more partners and a larger adult learner population, it needed more of an infrastructure and orderly decision-making process. Today, the infrastructure consists of a Juntos Coordinator, Paul Hyry, coordinators from each organization, and the advisory council. Currently, Hyry, a former CEP instructor and Director, serves as the key contact for the partnership, reports to the state on the performance of the Juntos programs, coordinates the research for and writing of the Assets and Needs Statement, serves as the city planner for ABE, and plans meetings for the coordinators and advisory council. Hyry also directs the HALO Center.



*Members of
the Advisory Council*

The coordinators from each of the six organizations serve as the main governance structure of Juntos. They work together to develop the partnership's approach to funding, community planning, service coordination, and staff and program development. Although the coordinators meet only once or twice a month, they are in frequent contact through e-mail and phone calls. Since Juntos formed, the relationship between the coordina-

tors has strengthened. While many of them already had relationships, now they do not hesitate to ask each other for help or advice. As one coordinator put it, they are “like family.”

To help with long-term community planning, the Juntos coordinators decided in 2000 to establish an advisory council for the collaborative as a whole. Members of the council represent a range of interests in the community from workforce development to higher education to family support. The following organizations are represented on the Council today:

- The Juntos program partners.
- The Holyoke School Committee (local school board).
- CareerPoint, the local One-Stop Center.
- Hampden Papers, a local employer.
- The Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce.
- Holyoke Community College.
- UMASS Amherst’s University without Walls, a degree program for older adults.
- Enlace de Familias, a social services and childcare agency.
- Solutions Community Development Corporation.
- Current and former ABE students.

The advisory council serves as the leadership group for community planning. The council is currently working on the development of a five-year strategic plan for adult basic education in Holyoke. Hyry collects, analyzes, and learns from new information he receives from the council, as well as a variety of other community sources. In addition to developing plans to meet the adult education needs of the community, the council advises Juntos on issues such as workforce development and accountability, as well as specific Juntos initiatives.

Creating an Advisory Council

Before the invitations were sent to potential advisory council members, the Juntos partners gave considerable thought to the role of the council. According to Paul Hyry, “The challenge was to provide the leadership and let the development of the group evolve.” Paul and the other coordinators wanted council members to take ownership for their role in Juntos. One council member described the first few meetings as “messy.” Another said, “It was chaotic at first, but I hung in there because I really care about this community. Each person cares about their own program, but even more so about the community.” Still another added, “The battles of getting it started are worth it.” He also said that he has used the Juntos partnership as a model for other collaborations in which he is involved: “It intends to tackle problems rather than hope that they will go away.”

Since Juntos was first created in 1995, its infrastructure has solidified. As one coordinator described this change:

In the last five years, the relationship has strengthened. We’re honest with each other. We do disagree at times. For the most part, we have the same vision and mission of what’s best for the community. The relationships have gotten healthier and stronger. Before Juntos, other collaborations were just referrals. This is a true partnership. We work together; we plan together. The level of trust of the collaboration is really amazing. It allows us to go so much farther with our mission. It goes way beyond education issues—there’s a lot of personal support as well.

The coordinators and advisory council members believe the success of Juntos is partly the result of Paul Hyry’s hard work, dedication, and vision. Yet they recognize that Juntos has taken on a life of its own. The partner organizations, council members, community leaders, and Holyoke residents have seen first-hand how the partnership has helped improve local adult education services. According to one council member, regardless of who leads the partnership, the Holyoke community “will force the collaborative to keep going. It’s now connected to the schools, daycare, the tax base, jobs. It’s intertwined in the community.”

JUNTOS IN THE COMMUNITY

Through their collaboration, the Juntos partners have streamlined and improved the adult education services they offer Holyoke residents. Each provider has its niche; they are complementary rather than competitive. For example, during weekday mornings HALO offers beginning and low-intermediate EL, ABE and GED courses, while CEP courses include Native Language literacy (NLL), intermediate and advanced English literacy, and College Transitions. Juntos publishes a course schedule that includes all the classes offered by each partner. Last year, together the partners were able to offer 250 spaces for adults in need of adult education services, an increase of 100 percent since the partnership began.

While in many respects the six partners act as one, their individuality has remained intact. Each organization has specific strengths and expertise that it brings to the effort. Each organization also recognizes that the partnership has allowed them to achieve results that they could not attain alone, including:

- More professional development opportunities.
- Enhanced curriculum.
- Improved support for learners.
- Increased accountability.
- More resources.
- Greater recognition in the community.

The HALO Center

The HALO Center is housed in a former elementary school near downtown Holyoke. It offers instruction in beginning ABE, pre-GED, and GED, in addition to beginning and low-intermediate English literacy. The HALO

teachers feel supported by the partnership. Through joint activities, such as developing curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Frameworks, they say they feel connected to the other programs. Kelly Martin, the EL teacher, commented that she used to worry about her students when they moved beyond her class to take more advanced courses at other partner sites. But now, she says, “When I send them to the next level, I know the teacher; I know that it’s a positive step for them, and they’re going to a good place.” Karen Morgan, HALO’s intake specialist, also sees the benefits of the partnership. She is delighted she can “give someone who comes through the door who doesn’t fit here a place to go, rather than a dead end.”

“The community is the customer of Juntos. When businesses consider moving to Holyoke, they come to CareerPoint to see if the community has qualified workers. Because of Juntos, businesses choose to relocate in Holyoke.”

David Gadaire
Executive Director of
CareerPoint

The Community Education Project (CEP)

Since 1991, CEP has served the education needs of Holyoke’s Latino community. Recently it moved into a South Holyoke storefront that’s been converted into classroom space. The entrance displays photos of graduates, students’ poetry, and other student work. CEP, a nonprofit, has a very active board of directors that includes a number of current and former adult learners. Its programs are funded by the Massachusetts DOE through Juntos, Holyoke Community Development Block Grant funds, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and other public and private sources. CEP’s courses include beginning Native Language Literacy and ABE for Spanish speakers, intermediate and advanced EL, ABE-to-College Transition classes, an evening GED class, and an afternoon EL class for parents of children in a nearby K-8 school. CEP’s partnership with the local Community Technology Center, ACCESS Holyoke, allows it to pro-



*Juan Pablo Jiménez,
Isolda Ortega-Bustamante,
Yolanda Robles and Rosa Sanchez*

vide computer literacy training for parents and their children at a nearby computer lab. CEP teachers have developed innovative ways to engage low-level EL learners, such as writing and performing plays. Students choose the themes of the plays and they also write scripts, conduct research, and act.

CEP learners are grateful for the opportunity Juntos provides to improve their English language skills. One learner, a Catholic nun from Romania said that she started English at the HALO Center and because her English has improved, is now taking courses at CEP. She said, “As a missionary, I need to be able to speak English. If I can’t, I can’t help someone.” Another

Massachusetts Career Development Institute’s Personal Touch

Seventy-five adult learners receive special care at MCDI, whether they’re enrolled in English literacy or job-training courses. Why? Larry Bay, program coordinator, and his staff are all former MCDI students. They understand what it’s like to work full-time, care for a family, and go to school. As one learner said, “Our teacher is the best! She really understands because she’s been there, too.”

Bay points to MCDI’s commitment to employment training and support as central to its unique role in Holyoke, noting that “many of the people served by the Juntos collaborative are impoverished, and finding a means of financial independence is often a priority for them. MCDI offers office systems technology and certified nurse aide training programs which include counseling, job placement assistance. . . and a variety of other support services. These trainings offer a viable career option to those unable to or uninterested in pursuing a college education.”

learner pointed out, “Only 6 percent of 17-19 year-olds in Holyoke will go to college. That’s why ABE programs are really important – for those who do not. Holyoke is one of the cities within Massachusetts that has the greatest need. Large numbers of adults want to study.” He continued, “I want to ensure that the opportunity to get the education that I am getting is available to all people who want and need it.”

Shared Professional Development

Professional development for Juntos staff is guided by the needs of individual teachers, providers, the partnership, and state requirements. The coordinators determine what professional development teachers need to improve curriculum and instruction. These decisions are based on teacher self-assessment and classroom evaluations, teacher/student surveys, the state’s information management system for adult education (the SMARTT System), the Assets and Needs Statement, program development goals, partnership objectives, and state priorities. Many of the education and training opportunities for Juntos staff members are offered by the state System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES).

The Juntos partners have been able to expand the formal and informal professional development opportunities available to their staff by sharing expertise and instructional materials. On the most basic level, staff have more opportunities to network, trade ideas, and share classroom materials with their peers. For example, while a CEP teacher spends one-half day per week assessing the literacy skills of One-Stop Center clients, some Juntos instructors are not familiar with the resources available at CareerPoint, Holyoke’s One-Stop. To address this, Juntos and CareerPoint recently held three meetings that brought together adult education instructors and career counselors to share information about the services that each provides. They are in the process of identifying long-term goals and objectives for their work together, which will focus on how to improve existing services through their collaboration.

Learner-Teacher Day

Learner-Teacher Day, begun in 2001, is an annual event organized by Juntos to bring learners, instructors, and administrators from all six partners together with community representatives, such as Holyoke's mayor and superintendent of schools, to discuss community issues. The entire planning process for the event is collaborative, from selecting a theme and organizing the day's activities to participating in the day's sessions. For example, for the second annual Learner-Teacher Day held in June 2002, titled "Participation in the Future: Adult Education in Our Community," students and instructors from each organization prepared activities for the event. Students from the Care Center wrote and acted in a skit. HALO Center GED students invited Holyoke's police chief to be part of a conversation about the role of the police in the community. In preparation, the HALO students drafted and presented a collective statement describing their perceptions of the police.

Former adult education learners participated in Learner-Teacher Day as members of a panel. All attendees also participated in cross-program workshops designed to identify pressing issues facing Holyoke residents and determine ways Juntos can support its learners in addressing those issues. The 2003 event, "My Family, My School, and Me: A Perfect Trio for Success" focused on how the integration of parents and other family members into children's education is a key to the future of the whole family.

Teachers also are given a chance to learn from others who teach similar classes or who specialize in different areas. They meet to discuss instructional strategies, and they share ideas by e-mail. Sometimes they teach each other's classes. For example, before taking his pre-GED class to a local art museum, a HALO teacher invited the art instructor at the Care Center to discuss painting techniques and imagery with the HALO students.

Enhanced Curriculum

Juntos partners have developed curriculum that meets the needs of the partnership, individual programs, and instructors. These shared curriculum

development efforts began in 1998 with the first of five Curriculum Frameworks project grants received by Juntos from the state Department of Education to take the Massachusetts Adult Basic Education Curriculum Frameworks and develop more specific curricula for the local community. For each of the five years, the Juntos coordinators chose a component of the frameworks (health, writing, math, science, and technology) and designated relevant instructors from each partner organization to work in teams to design curriculum. In 2001-02, for example, the coordinators focused on the integration of technology with writing. Instructors from each partner organization developed new curriculum units that used the core concepts, guiding principles, and content strands from the state Science, Technology, and Engineering and English Language Arts frameworks to generate learning activities appropriate for their own students' interests and ability levels. The coordinators are pleased with the results. One said, "The curricular frameworks are really impressive. You see teachers come together and end up with a product."



Another curriculum project is the 2001 multiyear English Literacy/Civic Participation project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Its purpose is to promote the teaching of literacy skills and civic education in an integrated program. A teacher from CEP headed the partnership's efforts and worked closely with other Juntos EL teachers and a curriculum expert from the New England Literacy Resource Center. The result of the collaboration was a series of plans to integrate new civic participation activities into each classroom during the 2002-2003 program year.

More Support for Learners

An enhanced curriculum, a more informed referral process, and events like Learner-Teacher Day are just a few ways adult learners have benefited from the partnership. Adult education services also are no longer duplicated; the partners have streamlined their course offerings, identified gaps in their services, and added new courses to fill the gaps. For example, when Juntos recognized it needed to build its capacity in the area of Native Language adult secondary education and to address the lack of EL instruction during the evening, the original partners invited the New England Farmworkers Council and MCDI to join as partners. Both organizations have a proven track record in offering such courses. Learners can make a natural progression from one program to the next, depending on their needs and goals. As a result, regardless of which program students go to first, they are referred to the program that best meets their needs. In addition, once learners are enrolled in a program within Juntos, they can bypass waiting lists when moving from one of the six partner programs to another.

Tutoring services also have been enhanced by the partnership. For example, once an adult gets near the top of a waiting list for one of the partners, he or she has the opportunity to be paired with a tutor. Many of the tutors and volunteers come from a tutor recruitment, training, placement, and support program run by the Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce; the coordinator of this program is a member of the Juntos advisory council and is recognized by all partners as a crucial presence in Holyoke's adult basic education system.



Other tutors and volunteers come from local four-year colleges, a result of the relationships the partners (particularly CEP) have built with these institutions. Still others come from the Mentor Program at Holyoke Community College. The mentors' role is especially meaningful not only because they help the instructors with their work, but also because many are former adult basic education learners from Holyoke and surrounding communities, and they provide a link between the learners and the community college. Tutors inform adult learners about the higher education services available and serve as role models, helping motivate learners to continue their education beyond the GED diploma.

Increased Accountability

By forming the partnership, the Juntos organizations have added another layer of accountability to the work they do. Now each organization is accountable not only to its students and its funders, but also to its other partners and the advisory council. Their reputations and success depend on each other. The partners pay close attention to each other and, when a gap or need is detected, the partnership as a whole decides how to address it. They also support each other in hiring, sharing information about available positions with their own contacts, serving as references for applicants, and often participating in each others' hiring committees.

The advisory council also monitors the progress of Juntos. Adult learners' education and training interests—the K-12 system, adult basic education, higher education, and workforce development—are represented on the council, and members hold each other accountable for meeting students' needs. For example, HCC will make sure Juntos is meeting the higher education needs of the students, while CareerPoint will see that their workforce needs are being addressed. The end result is a "customer-driven accountability system," according to David Gadaire, executive director of CareerPoint.

More Resources

Eligibility requirements for grants often favor partnerships. Since the formation of Juntos, the partner organizations have been more successful in attracting funding, especially grant money. Rather than starting from scratch when writing grant proposals, they have the information gathered each year for the community Assets and Needs Statement readily available to give them a better understanding of what the community needs. From 1995 through 1999, Juntos' annual base award from the state Department of Education increased dramatically (from approximately \$60,000 to just under \$400,000). While the availability of increased funding was very much a function of the state legislature's substantially increased commitment to ABE, Holyoke was able to benefit significantly because the collaborative offered a ready-made, flexible vehicle for the effective investment of new resources.

In addition, while Massachusetts' statewide ABE programs have experienced an overall loss of approximately 10 percent in public funding over the last three years, due to economic conditions, Holyoke's ABE system has actually experienced an increase in both public and private investment from 2000 to the present. Some grants that the Juntos partners have been awarded and/or have been central to leveraging include:

- Nellie Mae Education Foundation ABE-to-College Transition funds (a five-year, \$45,000 per year grant to CEP/HCC).
- Massachusetts Department of Education's English Literacy/Civic Participation Grant (a \$25,000 increase to Juntos' overall DOE award beginning in 2002-03.).
- Local Community Development Block Grant appropriations (annual funding for the Juntos partners and related ABE programs has increased by 35 percent since 2000).

- Family literacy grants. A federally funded Even Start grant for \$180,000, and a locally supported family literacy pilot project using state and local resources totaling just over \$100,000.
- ABE Curriculum Frameworks Integration and Technology Integration grants (from the state department of education) totaling approximately \$100,000 from 1997 through 2002.
- The appropriation in 2003-04 of 21st Century Learning Centers grant funds by the Holyoke Public Schools to CEP for an EL class for parents of students at the Kelly Elementary School.
- W.K.Kellogg Foundation Grant to HCC to sponsor a citywide planning effort aimed at promoting excellence in education for Latinos of all ages and, in particular, improving the rates of enrollment and retention of members of Holyoke's Latino community at HCC and other local colleges.

Connection to Community

Each partner has different community connections that it brings to Juntos. As a result, the partnership overall is linked to a wider range of community residents, organizations, service providers, educational institutions, businesses, and government officials than it would be without each partner's connections. As one Juntos member observed, "It's easy to become isolated, but not now, because we're part of a much larger family of programs."

Members of Juntos increasingly are being asked to serve on local committees and boards. For example, Juntos was asked to participate in the Holyoke Workforce Development Audit process of the Holyoke Employment Partnership/Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, and members also have been asked to join the Holyoke Employment Partnership, a local consortium of employers and workforce development providers. The partners also are becoming a stronger voice for adult edu-

cation in advocating for community, state, and federal support for adult basic education. There's "power in numbers," as one partner pointed out.

In addition, the partnership has gained increased visibility and support within Holyoke because of its advisory council. Council members can reach people in the city and state with whom the partners individually might not have much contact. For example, the council member from Holyoke's School Committee pointed out that she no longer has to convince other school committee members of the importance of adult education. This was evident during a recent school committee vote of 10 – 1 in favor of writing a letter to the state legislature to keep adult education as part of the state Department of Education rather than moving it to the Board of Higher Education. She also said that adult education issues are now introduced routinely as part of the school committee's agenda, without Juntos having to bring it to the attention of the board members. As one partner noted, "[Juntos] has increased our credibility within the city. Before we were seen as little isolated programs."

CONCLUSION

Even though Juntos has made significant progress, the partners recognize that there is much more work to be done. Funding is an ongoing issue for Juntos. Although the organizations have been more successful in obtaining grants since they've become part of a larger partnership, more funds are always needed to serve a greater number of the learners who want to improve their literacy, computer, and job skills. Other challenges facing Juntos include getting more community leaders and adult learners to become active members of the advisory council, continuing to improve the transition from adult basic education to higher education and the workforce, and developing a new crop of leaders to keep Juntos going.

Despite these challenges, Juntos continues to grow stronger. When asked what makes the partnership work, the representatives from the six organizations and the advisory council pointed to the following:

- Shared goals.
- A high level of commitment to the community and to each program.
- Trust among partners.
- Diversified funding and openness about finances.
- Strong leadership.
- Persistence.

Paul Hyry offers this advice to communities forming partnerships for adult literacy, "Be prepared. It's going to take a while before issues and substance can be addressed. A collaboration needs to evolve. Let it." He summarized the evolution and future direction of Juntos by saying, "We now have a coordinated program design and have added new services and complemented existing services. We've identified gaps, like the college transition course. We do projects together. We advocate together. We have a strong network. We started to think together, 'Where do we want to go as a community?' Now we're thinking about how to create an integrated ABE and workforce development system."



Paul Hyry