

DeLue Boys and Girls Club Fundraising Dinner Oct 16, 2010

Speech by Youth of the Year, Alberto Rodriguez, at the Mid-Peninsula Boys & Girls Club's 55TH Anniversary Celebration held on October 16, 2010 at the DeLue Boys & Girls Club, Bayshore Community Center and Library in Daly City.

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Hello and good evening...

Thank you Brittney for your wonderful introduction...

Thank you everyone for being here tonight. It is an honor to receive the Mid-Peninsula Boys & Girls Club's 2010 Youth of the Year Award.

The Youth of the Year award is the Boys & Girls Club's highest honor. It recognizes Club members that exhibit the qualities and values that the Club promotes including service to Club, community and family; academic performance; moral character; and life goals. Therefore it is with an incredible sense of gratitude that I accept this award, knowing that with such recognition comes a great deal of responsibility. I am my Club's representative. My promise is to always uphold the values of my Club.

Everyone deserves something that they can call their own. Something that makes you feel special and important. Everyone deserves to be heard and to belong. The Club represents this to me. And like my family, this Club accepts me for who I am. It is through this Club, that I can see myself 5... 10.... 25 years from now. And my future looks bright.

My future is the Club's promise to me.

When my parents emigrated from Mexico to the United States, they too could see their future. Like many immigrants, my parents knew that leaving home to make a new life for themselves in another country would be difficult. But the promise of a better life, a place where dreams can come true, a place to raise a family—what America represents—the choice was simple. So my parents found a new home, a new life and a promising future in their new country.

Neither my mom nor my dad graduated from high-school. I will be the first in my family to do so. And—this is a promise to all of you here tonight—I will be the first in my family to graduate from college, too.

Growing up, my parents emphasized the importance of education. They understand that an education opens doorways. They have always told my sister and I that they wanted more for us than what they had for themselves. They are an inspiration to me. And I'm also an inspiration to them. After graduating from Junior High School, my mother started taking classes at City College. Seeing me learn and grow, made her want to learn and grow, too. Not out of pride—but because of the special person she is. My dream is to be an electrical engineer. Her dream is to be a teacher—something that she's always been, if you ask me.

But I also want to recognize the role that the Club has had in my life and also my family's. My day to day routine before this Club opened up four years ago, was similar to a lot of us young people who live in the Bayshore—go to school, come home to an empty house and fend for yourself. If you needed help with homework—it'd have to wait. Many of us are children of immigrants, and our parents are often embarrassed because they can't help us with our schoolwork. And if you needed an adult to confide in, to talk to—that would have to wait too. With nothing to do you'd walk the streets. With no one around it would be only a matter of time before you'd find trouble or it would find you.

So when I heard that they were going to finally open the doors to the Bayshore Community Center and DeLue Boys & Girls Club—like many of us here in the Bayshore—I was excited. I

knew about Boys & Girls Clubs—that they were meant for people my age. I couldn't wait to get inside, meet other young people from my community and make friends. But I learned quickly that the Club is more than that.

I have made life-long friends here. But it's also because of the Club that I've improved my grades; that I now have a clear set of goals, a direction. I was introduced to my first computer here and now I'm learning advanced computer software. Because of the Club, I have a stronger sense of who am I—what is right and what is wrong; I take pride in my accomplishments, I want to lead by example.

It's because of the Club that I believe in myself; that I can be somebody that will make a difference in my neighborhood, my community and the world.

I want to thank the Club and the staff for being a force for change in this community. For opening these doors to me, my sister—who's also a member—and my mother and my father who regularly attend special events and participate in our Club's Capoeira program. As a family, we feel like we are part of a larger family here.

I also want to recognize the generosity of Mr & Mrs. Bob & Rita DeLue—of which our clubhouse is named.

Finally... I'd like to dedicate this award to my family. You are the most important thing in my life. I am grateful for your love, trust and support. And to all of you here tonight—it is an honor to be your 2010 Youth of the Year.

Alberto Rodriguez
Youth of the Year
10/16/10