

Interaction Goal of Mexican Independence Gala

By Vince Larkin

A celebrity master of ceremonies, Aztec and traditional Mexican dancers, Mexican ballads, a dinner and speeches marked the celebration of Mexican Independence day on Saturday evening at Kennedy Middle School. The event was produced by Hispanos Unidos with the cooperation of Kennedy Middle School and the Redwood City School District.

"The main idea behind this event was to develop an interaction between the Hispanic community and the Redwood City School District," said Kennedy Middle School Principal Derald Blackmore.

Blackmore approached Maria Bransford, who is president of Hispanos Unidos, with the idea for the event several weeks ago.

"Mr. Blackmore came to our meeting and invited us," said Bransford.

'One of our goals is to decrease the high percentage of Hispanic dropouts ...'

Bransford is one of the founders of Hispanos Unidos, an organization dedicated to achieving quality education for Hispanic students. Its goal is to work as liaison with the community, parents and local school districts in helping Hispanic students through school with the ultimate goal of completing high school.

"One of our main goals is to decrease the high percentage of Hispanic dropouts in the schools," Bransford said.

Both Bransford and Blackmore addressed the audience in both English and Spanish. In both of their speeches they addressed the importance of school district and Hispanic community working in partnership to help improve education for Hispanic students.

"There is a Spanish saying: 'My house is your house.' Well, let me improve on that tonight and say my school



The Raices de Mexico Ballet Folklorico performed last Saturday night at the Mexican Independence celebration at Kennedy Middle School in Redwood City.

Photo by Vince Larkin

is your school," Blackmore told the enthusiastic audience in both English and Spanish.

The festivities were hosted by KSOL radio personality Marcos Gutierrez. He told jokes and introduced speakers and

entertainment. Gutierrez is a former host of a Hispanic television show on KPIX 5. He is active in Hispanic organizations.

"He always helps us out whenever we need him. It helps a lot because he is real popular especially with the younger kids," said Hispanos Unidos trustee Alma Ibarra.

The program presented the Indian dance group Xitlalli, Azteca dancers. They performed a spiritual Aztec ritual which consisted mainly of dances. Dressed in Aztec headdress and traditional warrior garb, they burned incense and chanted Aztec songs with drums and instruments.

Joan Dougherty, an ESL teacher for the Sequoia Adult School, performed three Mexican ballads. She spoke to the audience in both Spanish and English, played guitar and sang.

Traditional Western Mexican dances were performed by Raices de Mexico, Ballet Folklorico. Men were dressed in the attire of the Mexican cowboy and women were dressed in beautiful and colorful dresses.

Following the dancing, Valentin Porras and Lupe Gallegos performed a skit entitled "El Grito de Independencia." This told a story of the Independence of the Mexican people from Spanish rule.