



## Hispanic Chamber grows base and outreach

**BY CLAUDIA CRUZ**

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Over 500 individuals recently attended the second annual Hispanic Business Expo in East Elmhurst, stunning the organizers.

"I am very satisfied," said Patricia Mahecha, President of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Queens (HCCQ), which had about 180 attendees at the breakfast with **Commissioner Robert Walsh of the New York City Small Business Administration**. "The idea was to make connections between small businesses and that is exactly what we did."

Connecting small business owners, whether Hispanic or not, to one another and also providing a platform for Hispanic business owners to reach potential consumers and clients has been the objective of the HCCQ and the free Expo, on Thursday, June 16 at the Crowne Plaza-LaGuardia Hotel, became the vehicle to accomplish just that.

"I've been making some good contacts, and specifically with accountants, who are my primary sources of referrals. I have a lot of following up to do," said business law attorney Argelio Rodriguez of The Rodriguez Law Firm, who joined the HCCQ two months ago. "I was a little concerned for awhile because I

wasn't aware of the scope of the Chamber. A lot of Chambers don't stand for much but this is pretty impressive."

Approximately 60 exhibitors marketed and explained to Expo-goers their services – possibly picking up new business too. Green Ink Solutions, an environmentally-friendly company that recycles parts from used printer ink cartridges, came from Brooklyn to participate in this Expo and left pleased.

"The turnout was better than we thought," said partner Ray Da Silva. "We ran out of business cards."

But not all of the exhibitors wanted to make business contacts. Some just wanted to spread the word on the services they offer in the community. St. Mary's Healthcare System for Children, which works with the organization Families Building Community in Jackson Heights, participated because 48 percent of the patients they serve are Hispanic and they felt an obligation to be involved.

With only two years in the United States, television presenter Miguelina Rodriguez enjoyed the workshops offered throughout the morning. These included "Strategies for Success" with motivational speaker Karen Hoyos, "The Energy Saver 'Green Seminar'" by Con Edison, "Bankruptcy Strategies for Small Business" by HCCQ Board Member and attorney Jose Rey, and "Small business and Technology" by John Rosales, also an HCCQ Board Member.

"I love that they are making people aware of the formulas that will benefit them," said Rodriguez, who attended the Expo for public-relations purposes. "They are nourishing us free of charge."