On September 21st, 2011 the Latinos in the Deep South Project of the Latino Commission on AIDS (The Commission), held its first DENNIS DE LEON SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT, where a total of 12 emerging leaders graduated from the Dennis Deleon Sustainable Leadership Institute (DdLSLI). The institute provided a space for emerging community leaders to enhance and develop leadership skills in order to impact HIV/AIDS at the local, state and federal health policy levels. The Commission created the Institute to serve as a platform to promote participatory and honest dialogue about how to address the pressing social, policy and structural issues affecting Latinos in the Deep South. We believe this was an opportunity for enhancing new advocacy/policy efforts, support existing local coalitions and create sustainable leadership actions in the Southern States.

The DdLSLI was implemented from April through July 2011, with a diverse group of emerging leaders from North Carolina, South Carolina and Louisiana; the Institute engaged all participants in discussing several key policy issues affecting Latinos in the South such as:

- Impact of current anti immigration laws in the Southern States
- State of public transportation and its impact on healthcare access, particularly in rural areas
- ADAP waiting list
- Criminalization of HIV/AIDS
- Syringe Access Programs (SAP) and community engagement towards supporting SAP

The Leadership Summit in Columbia, SC was the final step for cohort 1, the institute’s first cohort. During the Summit all participants presented on their collective actions for responding to local health policy issues affecting Latinos in the Southern States, as well on the importance of identifying local resources and key players for coalition building, in order to collaboratively impact current local health policies that are detrimental to Latinos in the Deep South. The Commission’s Vice President, Miriam Vega, and the Latinos in the Deep South Director, Christian Castro, facilitated a town hall on Structural Level Interventions for Impacting Local Health Policy. Participants also

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Leadership Summit, cont...

engaged in a discussion on Latinos and the 2010 Census, facilitated by Mr. Castro and Yanira Arias, Director of Community Organizing at the Commission.

Cohort 2 of the DdLSLI will be implemented between the spring and summer 2012 and will engage emerging leaders from Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi and Georgia, stay tuned for application process!

The Latino Commission on AIDS would like to express its gratitude to the Consortium for Latino Immigration Studies of the University of South Carolina, for the tremendous support provided to make the leadership Summit a reality. This served as an example of strong partnerships that are very much needed to build platforms for activism among emerging leaders and promoting honest dialogs for policy change in the South. Guest presenters of the leadership summit included Tony Price, MPH, Prevention Program Manager SC DHEC, STD/HIV Division and Alberto M. Santana, MS Public Health Analyst, Partnerships Team Capacity Building Branch Division of HIV/AIDS Prevention National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD & TB Prevention Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

We dedicated our first Leadership Summit in Columbia, South Carolina to our beloved leader Dennis deLeon, founder and former president of the Commission. He was and will always be bigger than life. In late 1994, he took over the Commission and built a strong organization that grew at the local, regional and national levels. He brought attention to the urgent need to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis affecting our communities and became a voice for the voiceless affected by discrimination and homophobia. Dennis deLeon was an advocate and leader, but most importantly, he was our beloved friend. Last but not least, we would like to congratulate all the graduates of the 2011 the Dennis deLeon Sustainable Leadership Institute; we commend your hard work throughout the entire cohort and we invite each of you to become a mentor for other emerging leaders in your region.