Todos a la Mesa: Unity Table Brings 23 Cities to One Table for Hispanic Heritage Month

More than 230 guests from 23 cities joined Unity Table at The Highlawn for "Todos a la Mesa", celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month and community leadership.



From left: Assemblywoman Alixon Collazos-Gill and Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz hold their Unity Table awards at Todos a la Mesa on September 24, 2026, at The Highlawn in West Orange, N.J. Photo by Jimmy Records

WEST ORANGE, NJ, UNITED STATES, September 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More than 230 guests gathered at The Highlawn to celebrate culture, honor service, and show that everyone belongs at the table.

On Thursday, September 24, more than 230 people from 23 cities across seven New Jersey counties and New York City gathered at The Highlawn for Todos a la Mesa ("Everyone to the Table"), Unity Table's Hispanic Heritage Month celebration. Elected officials, business owners, nonprofit leaders, artists, and neighbors came from different backgrounds and shared one space for an evening of connection.

Why We Celebrate

Hispanic Heritage Month runs from September 15 to October 15. It honors the history, culture, and contributions of Americans with roots in Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Hispanic and Latino communities help shape New Jersey's economy, neighborhoods, and public life. Honoring that legacy also means making sure those voices are heard wherever the future is decided.

Different Voices. Shared Solutions.

Unity Table believes strong communities are built when people who might never meet sit down together. Unity Table founder J. Wayman Henry III opened the evening by calling on guests to look past political and cultural differences and focus on what they share: pride in their cultures,

> If we're not all at the table, we become part of the menu"
>
> *Senator M. Teresa Ruiz*

love for their communities, and a desire to serve.

"We want to make sure that we're all here to serve and that we give back," Henry said.

"Our differences are not what divide us. They are what make us stronger," said Rita Duran, Executive Director of Unity Table. "When we come together from every background, we stop being strangers and start becoming neighbors, partners, and advocates for one another. Todos a la Mesa is about building a community where everyone has a seat, everyone has a voice, and no one has to stand alone."

A Room Full of Leadership

Orange Mayor Dwayne D. Warren, Esq., led the introductions and recognized the leaders in the room: Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz; Assemblywomen Alixon Collazos-Gill, Carmen Theresa Morales, and Eliana Pintor Marin; Essex County Board of Commissioners President Carlos M. Pomares; Essex County Sheriff Amir D. Jones; and Dr. Saudi Garcia, an anthropologist and strategy leader.

Honoring Service

Assemblywoman Alixon Collazos-Gill received Unity Table's Community Leadership Award for Dedicated Community Leadership.

The evening's highest honor, the Legacy Award for Trailblazing Public Service, went to Senator M. Teresa Ruiz. Her remarks captured the meaning of the night.

"If we're not all at the table, we become part of the menu," she said.

She urged guests to support one another, especially when someone is the only person in the room representing their community. A seat at the table matters. So does the support to use your voice once you're there.

The Celebration Continues

DJ Skelly kept the energy going after the program as guests connected over refreshments. At the silent auction, Oren Schneider won The King of Pop, a framed Ghanaian silk-thread artwork donated by New Jersey Arts World of Union, N.J.

With Gratitude

Unity Table thanks leading sponsor CareWell Health Medical Center and host venue The

Highlawn. It also thanks On Collab, New Jersey Consulting Solutions, Brivado Cigars, Little Box of Love, Fulmore Foundation, Double Cross Vodka, New Jersey Arts World, Sheriff Amir D. Jones and the Essex County Sheriff's Office, DJ Skelly, photographer Jimmy Records, and videographer T. Hudson.

Todos a la Mesa showed Unity Table's mission in action. People from many communities met face to face, honored service, and left with new connections and a reason to keep the conversation going.

Different Voices. Shared Solutions.

Unity Table is a nonpartisan program of Little Box of Love, an IRS-recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Learn more at unitytable.org.

Rita Duran
Unity Table
info@unitytable.org
Visit us on social media:
Instagram

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/945754914

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.
© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.