



Ashley Haynes/Freeman Staff

La Casa de Esperanza students make their grand entrance by performing a drum routine called a "call to peace."

Drumming in the new school year

La Casa de Esperanza officially opens new charter school

By Ashley Haynes
Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA — La Casa de Esperanza welcomed the new school year with style at Friday morning's ribbon cutting ceremony. Students, parents and community partners all gathered for the grand opening of La Casa's recently completed charter school. Tiny drummers put on a show for spectators as they provided the soundtrack for each speaker who walked toward the stage before the building. Welcoming remarks were made by Anselmo Villarreal, president and CEO of La Casa de Esperanza. Villarreal has dreamed of creating a new charter school for years.

"Today is a historical day, not only for La Casa de Esperanza and the Waukesha community, but it is a historical day for school reform," said Villarreal. "No one would argue that we have a significant statistical difference between low-income children and more affluent children. That is the core of La Casa and we serve the same opportunities other children may have."

Villarreal expressed his gratitude for all of the support the community has



The Rev. Larry Dulek and Marcos Ramos, a previous La Casa board member, cut the ribbon.



La Casa students settle right into their new classrooms as they jump into their first day of school.

shown throughout the process of constructing the new school. One person in particular showed exceptional support and was brought on stage to speak after him — Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch.

"I so wholeheartedly believe in La Casa's mission to close the achievement gap here in Wisconsin and

become a model for the United States of America," said Kleefisch.

She recalled how when she met Villarreal for the first time 10 years ago, he gave her a tour of La Casa. One of the first things he did was point to an empty lot of land and say "One day we will build a school there." Kleefisch said the completion of this new charter school has been a long time coming.

"Truly this was a mountain to be taken up and thrown into the sea," said Kleefisch. "And today, a mountain has been moved, a school has been built and it will be open to educate young ones from across Waukesha County."

The last speaker Friday morning was the Rev. Larry Dulek, who led the group in a blessing for the school and asked for a moment of silence to pray for those affected by the flooding in Houston. Then, it was time to cut the red ribbon.

All of the people who have donated to La Casa de Esperanza and made the new charter school possible were invited to the front of the school and awarded a plaque. Then, Dulek and Marcos Ramos, a past La Casa board member, had the honor of cutting the ribbon.

Students and families were invited into the building shortly afterwards. Kids found their brand-new classrooms as parents looked on and snapped photos.

La Casa de Esperanza's new charter school cost a total of \$6 million dollars and will serve over 300 students. Villarreal says he hopes the school will one day serve over 1,000 kids.

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