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Press Release

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Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces announces new board members

Las Cruces, N.M. – The Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces is proud to announce the selection of five local business professionals to join the organization’s Board of Directors. New board members will serve two-year terms, effective Jan. 1, 2011.

New board members are Jeffrey Silva, commercial banking manager and vice president at Bank of the West; Peter Ibarbo, president of Ibarbo Consulting Group; Janet Honek, managing member of Sunspot Solar Energy Systems; Edward Ruiz, co-owner of Lessons of Life LLC; and Rosa De La Torre Burmeister; career services coordinator at Doña Ana Community College.

“We are thrilled to have these individuals volunteer their time, efforts and resources to help advance the mission and work of the Hispano chamber,” said board President Gilbert Apodaca. “They each bring individual qualities and degrees of experience in their respective fields and are already leaders in this community. The chamber will greatly benefit from their contributions as will the chamber’s members.”

Silva graduated with a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Colorado. He started his banking career working for Wells Fargo in Albuquerque. He’s recently served on the board of the Southwestern Chapter of the Red Cross and Junior Achievement. Silva was also named the March of Dimes New Mexico Volunteer of the Year for his local fundraising efforts as part of the Team Zane campaign.

Ibarbo is the owner and founder of Ibarbo Consulting Group LLC. He has more than 10 years of experience in international business, facilitating trade, relocation and business opportunities for entrepreneurs on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. He is a graduate of New Mexico State University and has worked previously for the U.S-Mexico Chamber of Commerce in Mexico City, the New Mexico Trade Office in Chihuahua City, Chihuahua, Mexico and the International Business Accelerator in Santa Teresa, N.M.

Honek is the co-owner and managing partner of Sunspot Solar Energy Systems. With husband and co-owner Mellow Honek, she has grown her small business tremendously over the last two years. Honek is also the sales manager for her company. Prior to owning the business, Honek trained to be a chaplain. She is also a member of the New Mexico Solar Energy Association, Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce, Building Industry Association of Southern New Mexico, American Solar Energy Society and the U.S. Green Building Council.

Ruiz is the co-owner and operator of Lessons of Life LLC, a Las Cruces company that offers employment and supported living services to individuals with disabilities in nine counties in southern New Mexico. He has more than 15 years of experience working with the New Mexico Developmental Disabilities Waiver and has a bachelor's degree in psychology.

De La Torre Burmeister is the director of career services at Doña Ana Community College. There, she assists community college programs related to adult basic education, GED education, English as a Second Language education and workforce development. At DACC and NMSU, De La Torre Burmeister has been a student, administrative assistant and academic adviser. A native of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, De La Torre has several years of academic and industry experience from her work in Africa, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Missouri and Costa Rica. Her previous positions have included graphic design coordinator for Capital Blue Cross Blue Shield, marketing specialist for Milton Hershey School, assistant director for Elizabethtown College's Family Business Center and most recently as the training and development coordinator for the University of Missouri.

Other board changes will take effect Jan. 1, 2011, including the first term as board president for current vice president John Muñoz, site director for Sitel. Jessie Sanchez, assistant vice president and Picacho Branch Manager for Citizens Bank of Las Cruces, will remain in the treasurer's position and Marketing Committee Chair Gabe Vasquez, business editor for the Las Cruces Bulletin, will continue his term as secretary of the board. The vice president position will remain vacant until the board selects a new board member to fill the slot during its regularly scheduled board meeting in January 2011.

Other returning board members include Events Committee Chair Joel Motyl, owner of Motyl Marketing; Government Affairs Committee Chair Domonic Silva, contract lobbyist for David Kimble & Associates; Education Committee Co-Chair Jesus Lozoya Jr., licensed multi-line agent for American National Property & Casual; Santiago R. Soto III, area manager of ItsQuest Inc. Professional Employment Solutions; Alfred Perez, owner of Ariel Technologies; Membership Committee Chair Tony Martinez, territory manager for Molina Healthcare. Ex-officio board member Toby Sanchez Rue, financial adviser at Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, will serve as an advisory board member to the chamber and departing Board President Gilbert

Apodaca will fill the ex-officio position. Amanda Olivarez Cruz, who was hired as the chamber's executive director in January, will remain in her position. Exiting board members include Robert Sanchez, former new sales director at Bravo Chevrolet-Cadillac, and Lisa Carreon, Starbucks general manager.

"I'm excited about starting a new chapter of pride and progress in our community through the work of the Hispano chamber, its volunteers and its nearly 400 business partners in the community," said Board President-elect John Muñoz. "We have some great initiatives and improvements to our member services planned in 2011, and we know with the skills and enthusiasm of our board, we will be successful in our endeavors as advocates of the local business community. We want to thank the community for their support of the Hispano chamber in 2010."

About the Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces:

The Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces, through its diverse membership, advocates for business growth in the community and promotes Las Cruces and Hispanic business owners through economic development, education, community service, and cultural awareness. The Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces was initiated in 1992 as the Hispano Chamber of Doña Ana County, and in 1994 incorporated as The Hispano Chamber of Commerce de Las Cruces. The original founders consisted of a group of businesspersons interested in developing a support organization for small, Hispanic businesses. In November 2010, the board unanimously voted to increase its board member count to 15 in order to better serve its members and the community at large.