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## Tina Fanucchi-Frontado: Hospice of Santa Barbara Honors Latino Grief Process, Traditions

By Tina Fanucchi-Frontado for Hospice of Santa Barbara | Published on 07.24.2014 11:40 a.m.

Latinos in the United States represent a wide variety of cultures. In the Santa Barbara community, Mexican heritage is the most predominant. Someone may wonder why, other than language, Latino programs would differ from other **Hospice of Santa Barbara** approaches. Well, in many respects they don't, but as hospice practitioners our counseling and support services must take into consideration the cultural and religious differences in all communities.



Tina Fanucchi-Frontado

Here are some general attributes to grieving that may exemplify the Latino grief and death experience:

- » In many Latino cultures, the entire family is involved in making important life decisions, and there can be a strict family hierarchy that should be honored.
- » Traditionally, status is ordered from the older to the younger family members, and from males to females.
- » Latino males can be less likely to express their emotions and grief.
- » Many Latinos embrace religion and spirituality, as well as a belief in the spiritual and psychological continuity between the living and the dead.
- » As part of that spirituality, the family may continue a relationship with the deceased person after death through prayer and visits to the gravesite.
- » Most Mexican-Americans are Catholic and consider the funeral an important tradition. Services are heavily attended and led by Catholic priests who honor the recently departed. In many communities, the wake is usually held at the family's home, where loved ones come to strengthen ties and pay respects to the deceased.
- » Children are socialized at a young age to accept death as part of life.

» Family members bring candles to church and light them at the altar following the death of a loved one (and often for years to come).

» Although Mexican-Americans embrace death, it is important for them to say goodbye to loved ones with elaborate funerals and long periods of mourning.

Hospice of Santa Barbara is here to care for everyone in the community coping with loss. Our Latino Family Services offer free counseling, support groups and education to help Spanish (and English) speaking adults, teens and children who are experiencing the impact of a life-threatening illness, or grieving the death of a loved one.

To date this year, Hospice of Santa Barbara has served 215 monolingual Spanish-speaking families in our community. With community support, HSB services to the Latino community will continue to grow with each passing year.

On July 10, Hospice of Santa Barbara celebrated its fourth annual Dia de las Comidas in support of its Latino Family Services. Once again, this event was possible thanks to the generosity of Carlos Lopez-Hollis and family.

The Lopez-Hollis family donated a significant portion of the day's proceeds to Hospice of Santa Barbara's Latino Family Services from their three restaurants: **Cava Restaurant & Bar** in Montecito, **Carlitos Café y Cantina** in Santa Barbara and **Dos Carlitos Restaurant & Tequila Bar** in Santa Ynez.

We thank them from the bottom of our hearts and our stomachs!

— *Tina Fanucchi-Frontado is the interim chief executive officer for **Hospice of Santa Barbara**.*