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NEWS RELEASE

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D.A. Lynne Abraham Announces the “Latino Literacy Project” and Names Two District Attorney’s Liaisons to the Latino Community

The Comcast Foundation Donates \$10,000 to Urban Genesis to Fund the Latino Literacy Project, the Newest Crime Prevention Tool

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January 13, 2004---District Attorney Lynne Abraham today announced two new initiatives to provide services to the Latino community. The first is The Latino Literacy Project. The second is the naming of two District Attorney’s Liaisons to the Latino community.

1. The Latino Literacy Project---“Literacy is my newest crime-prevention tool,” said District Attorney Lynne Abraham. “Good readers are more likely to graduate from high school, and educated people are less likely to commit crimes. That is why I want our students reading well at the earliest possible level.”

This pilot project in the Taylor Elementary School at 6th Street and Erie Avenue targets kindergarten and first grade students. Seventy-seven percent of the students are Latino and more than fifty percent are reading below grade level. The goal is to improve English comprehension and reading skills at this early age so that students will excel in school and graduate. The district attorney thinks that the best chance to make an impact is with a literacy program at the grade school level.

Currently, Latino students represent 12% of the student population of the Philadelphia School District. They have the highest dropout rate among all ethnic groups in Philadelphia's public schools. Fifty-five percent of Latinos over age 25 in Philadelphia have not graduated from high school. The district attorney sees literacy as a powerful tool in reversing this trend.

In partnership with the Comcast Reading Network, the Comcast Foundation has generously donated \$10,000 to Urban Genesis to fund the *Latino Literacy Project*. Urban Genesis is the district attorney's 501 (c) (3) non-profit corporation whose prime purpose is to make neighborhoods safer by removing criminal activity and promoting revitalization projects in these strengthened neighborhoods.

Through support of local reading initiatives, the Comcast Reading network is a company-wide effort dedicated to advancing literacy levels and reading skills in Comcast communities. Comcast believes that young people need to maintain basic literacy and reading skills in order to benefit from advances in technology. The district attorney wishes to thank the management team of Comcast Corporation for their commitment and generosity in support of this investment in our children.

Broadband cable technology plays a powerful role as an educational tool, but Comcast believes that basic reading skills are still the foundation of learning," said Kevin Smith, Area Vice President, Comcast Cable. "In partnership with District Attorney Lynne Abraham and Urban Genesis, Comcast and the Comcast Foundation are pleased to support this initiative to strengthen literacy and reading skills of students in this area of Philadelphia."

Working with Urban Genesis, the Children's Literacy Initiative and Executive Director Linda Katz will oversee the project and work with the Kindergarten and first-grade teachers at the Taylor School and spend two half-days with the principal. CLI will give to all 9 kindergarten and first-grade teachers a classroom library collection, and the kindergarten, first and second grade teachers will attend a full-day seminar on reading aloud to support instruction. At the seminar, CLI will help teachers learn to improve subject content teaching, reading comprehension and vocabulary. **The work with the principal will include a visit to the Washington School in Camden, which improved their reading scores from 18% of the 4th graders reading on grade level to 80% in two years.**

Additionally, the clergy from the Latino community has agreed to provide volunteer mentors to help the students in any way they can as part of the Latino Literacy Project.

2. District Attorney's Liaisons to the Latino Community—The district attorney believes that it is essential for bicultural and bilingual people to have a complete understanding of the criminal justice system, the role of the district attorney's office and the services that the district attorney's office provides. The district attorney also hopes that the liaisons will provide a needed link to encourage people to report crimes that might otherwise go unreported. To that end, the district attorney announces the appointment of the two newest District Attorney Liaisons, Assistant District Attorney and Chief of the Juvenile Court Unit Angel Flores and Police Officer Edwin "Bo' Diaz, who is assigned to the district attorney's office.

Assistant District Attorney Angel Flores is the Chief of the District Attorney's Juvenile Court Unit. He will provide to the community answers regarding policy and or procedural questions about the criminal justice system, the juvenile justice system, the role of the prosecutor and victims services provided by the district attorney's office. As in any other situation, he is prohibited by law from discussing individual cases. Assistant District Attorney Flores joined the office in 1991 and has a wide range of experience in many areas including juvenile cases, child abuse and sexual assault cases. He was promoted to Chief of the Juvenile Unit in June 2003.

Police Officer Edwin "Bo" Diaz' will serve as the Latino Liaison for community affairs. He is already very well known and active in the Latino community. A police officer since 1979, he is a former Community Relations Office, wrote a Spanish jargon book to assist officers in overcoming language barriers and is active in the Police Explorers Program for young people. He has helped organize town watch groups, has served as President of the Spanish American Law

Enforcement Officers Association and has served on the Board of Families of Murder Victims.

He joined the District Attorney's Office in 1998 and is assigned to the Homicide Investigations Unit. Officer Diaz's appointment as a District Attorney's Liaison is a natural extension of the work that he is already doing.