

Hombres Con Razon: Young Men Step Up and Take Responsibility

By Caitlin Longoria

On Saturday April 26th, I had the privilege of joining in the first annual Fatherhood Conference. The group meeting entitled "Hombres Con Razon" was cosponsored by two programs: Southwest Key and American Indians of Texas. The program teaches young men who are either fathers or expecting-to-be-fathers what they will face as parents.

The meeting started off with an introduction from Jesus Sanchez (Program Director of Southwest Key) and Dr. Juan Sanchez (President of Southwest Key). Dr. Juan Sanchez explained that he started the program fifteen years ago when he noticed that the majority of male youths in the Juvenile Detention Centers and jails were Latinos with no father figures. He wanted to find a way to keep them out of jails and asked himself how do you keep them out and interested in other things besides getting into trouble. He

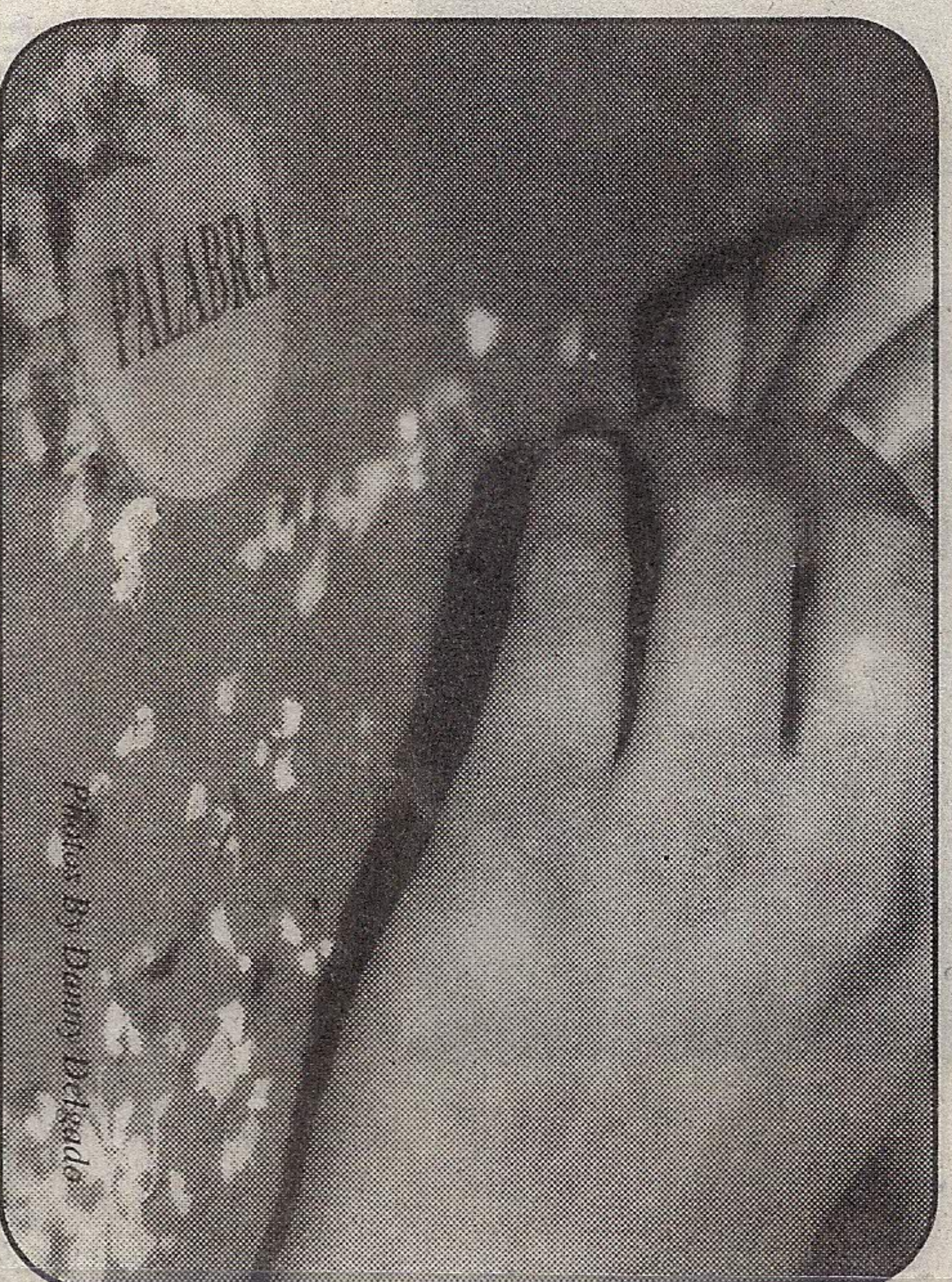


soon started a program called Southwest Key, a program where young men could have a father image in their lives.

After an introduction of the program, there was a blessing of thanksgiving by the American Indians of Texas, in which all directions were blessed. It was very interesting being in the presence of young men respectfully turning and listening attentively to their elders. When asked questions, they responded with respect and dignity. When the blessing was over, they sat in a circle and answered the questions: Name/ Birthplace/ One thing they learned from a man/ and what they thought "Hombres Con Razon" meant. Some of their responses to what they thought a Man of Reason was: 'A man of reason is not afraid to learn from his mistakes or to learn from others.' 'A man of reason listens and gives good advice.' 'A man who cares.' 'A man who does not limit himself.' One nineteen year old father said he learned a lot about fathering from going to the program.

The American Indians of Texas provided a lot of support to the boys, giving advice and listening while they talked in the circle. They also blessed the ceremony and gave encouraging drumbeats.

They took a break for lunch and returned to do some arts and craft provided by the A.I.T. Their activities were to make a necklace and a God's eye for a friend, child or relative. They all participated in the activities while talking with each other.



The program teaches young men to bond with each other because they can learn more about fatherhood from one another. They'll have the support of other young men and older more experienced men. Southwest Key and American Indians of Texas provided male figures for the boys and advice when they need it.

For more information on Southwest Key you can call Jesus Sanchez, Program Director of S.W. Key at 349.8957. For more info on American Indians of Texas-Spanish Colonial Missions you can call Frank Castro, Program Coordinator at 227.4940.

Caitlin has just graduated from Inner City and will be moving on to Madison HS next school year. She is also Staff Member of El Placazo.