

# Multicultural Institute hosts Thanksgiving for jornaleros (day laborers)

On Thursday, November 27 – Thanksgiving, more than 100 jornaleros (day laborers) congregated at the James Kenney Recreation Center in West Berkeley for the 23rd annual Thanksgiving meal prepared by the Multicultural Institute. The purpose of the meal was to give day laborers a place to go on Thanksgiving, when there are few, if any, jobs to be had.

As part of the tradition, the meal was served at noon...following the conclusion of a friendly (yet competitive) soccer tournament also organized by the Multicultural Institute on the field adjacent to the recreation center. After a casual awards ceremony (involving lots of phone photos) in the gymnasium, the jornaleros climbed the stairs to the upstairs community room, where Father Rigo Calocari was greeted them with a prayer (in both Spanish and English). Father Rigo prayed for peace and reconciliation, not just for families but for nations throughout the world. Then suddenly, it was mealtime.

This year's Thanksgiving feast consisted of chicken and potatoes roasted in achiole sauce, mashed potatoes, yams, tamales, fresh cole slaw (consisting of cabbage, carrots, and corn), and bread rolls. For dessert, the workers were offered a variety of pies – all of which were gobbled off paper plates with the help of plastic knives and forks.

When asked about the dinners, the workers explained to *Berkeley Times* (with the help of a translator) that Thanksgiving was not a



**Photo captions:** 1. More than 50 volunteers prepared meals of roasted chicken, mashed potatoes, tamales, and the works for the annual Thanksgiving Dinner for Day Laborers hosted by the Multicultural Institute at James Kenney Recreation Center. • 2. & 4. On a day when few could find work, more than 100 jornaleros (day laborers) were served meals in the upstairs community room. • 3. Proud of their effort, the kitchen crew and leaders of the Multicultural Institute posed for a photo.

holiday in their homeland, but that they were grateful for the meal anyway, because no work could be found on this holiday.

“Best of all [about the meal],” commented Javier, “is the service

of the Multicultural Institute.”

Indeed, Berkeley’s day laborers know the Multicultural Institute (M-I) not just for their community dinners, but for all the services they offer year-round: basic health care,

legal services, job referrals. Many M-I staffers were on site for the Thanksgiving meal and so were many volunteers from the community – about 50 volunteers in all.

For sports fans curious about the results of the annual Thanksgiving morning Soccer Tournament, North Fair Oaks (Redwood City) defeated Real Independiente (Oakland) in the finals, 2-1.

Staff photos