

Riverside Park 4th Annual Spanish American Heritage Festival

On Thursday October 13th 2011, Riverside Park celebrated the 4th Annual Spanish American Heritage Festival. It was a evening filled with excitement commencing with Maria Hernandez, Chairperson of the Spanish American Committee, giving the welcoming address to the community and introducing the committee which includes Jahira Gonzales, Doriela Sentena, Nancy Baxter of Bellaire Puritas Development Cooperation, and Michael Burns, Riverside Park Community Center Manager.

The event included a candle lighting ceremony dedicated to the past, present, and future of the Spanish people, Spanish culture, and Spanish heritage. Following the candle ceremony, there was a parade of nation where the children of the community marched through the community center holding 26 flags from the different countries throughout the world and information was read about each country. The 21st Century afternoon program performed a song that was in Spanish, which the children learned from Ms. Doriela Sentena, an instructor from Essence of Dance.

Additionally, a special award was presented to members of the Spanish community for their leadership and dedication. Chief Gonzales came forth and gave remarks and encouragement to the audience. This year, the recipients were Officer Jackie Burgos and Officer Omar Troche from the CMHA police department and of Spanish decent, Mr. Harold Peguero, AMP Leader of the Far Westside, Nancy Eakins-Rodrigues and Margareta Hernandez, Resident Managers of Bellaire Gardens, and the Soto Family, who is noted for their outstanding community involvement at Riverside Park Estate. The evening program ended with a Spanish dance demonstration by *Essence of Dance*.