

Legacy of Servingness Award

Presented to Graciela De La Cruz, Jesus Salas, Ernesto Chacon, Fela Salinas, Felipe Rodriguez, Nelson Goodson, Rubén Burgos, Jose Pérez, and Patricia Najera



Presented at the PALM 2025 Graduation Gala, this award honors all who have contributed to the 55-year legacy of the Spanish Speaking Outreach Institute and the Roberto Hernández Center.

It recognizes the collective leadership, unwavering service, and enduring commitment that have uplifted UWM's Latine students across generations. This tribute celebrates a legacy rooted in advocacy, cultural pride, and the pursuit of educational equity—a powerful testament to the past and present champions who have shaped our community with love, resilience, and purpose.

Their impact continues to inspire a future guided by service and joyful aspiration.

Puente Award

presented to

Jennifer Garcia-Cortez

¡ F E L I C I D A D E S !

The Puente Award honors a graduating Latine student who has demonstrated a significant commitment to building & maintaining connections between UWM and the Milwaukee community in addition to upholding high academic standards while embodying leadership and success.



Jennifer Garcia-Cortez, a Milwaukee native with roots in Veracruz, Mexico, is a first-generation college graduate who overcame significant obstacles to achieve her higher education goals. Facing financial strain and uncertainty about college selection before graduation, she also lacked guidance in navigating the college experience. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its social distancing and virtual learning, further complicated her journey. Introduced to the Roberto Hernández Center by a friend, Jennifer found invaluable support and direction, which ultimately helped solidify her major.

As a student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, she was deeply involved with the center, building lasting friendships and volunteering at events such as Bienvenida, the PALM Gala, and many others. She also held leadership positions, including president of the Latinx Student Union, advocate for the Lawton Program, and lead volunteer for PALM.

In Fall 2024, Jennifer earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education with a bilingual certification. Thanks to the support of her parents and everyone she met throughout her four and a half years at UWM, she is now a passionate dual-language kindergarten teacher at La Casa de Esperanza. She inspires the next generation and embodies the message, "¡Sí se puede!"