

Community event reaches out to assist immigrants



Photo Courtesy Sally Kunke
Buck and Elizabeth provided entertainment at the Community & Family Resource & Health Event at the Willapa Harbor Community Center in South Bend.

BY GEORGE KUNKE,
geoakunke@gmail.com

SOUTH BEND – The Community & Family Resource & Health Event turned out to be a gala and beneficial day that offered support for immigrants in north Pacific County. A few hundred people stopped by the Willapa Harbor Community Center in South Bend on May 14 to learn

more about how to better adapt to a new community. It was sponsored by Family Education & Support Services, Acasa Pharmacy, Pacific County Immigrant Support (PCIS), CHOICE Regional Health Network/Cascade Pacific Action Alliance, Timberland Regional Library, Firelands Workers United, Grays Harbor County Public Health, Valley View Health Center, Sea Mar Community Health Centers, Save the Children, Community Health Plan of Washington, Amerigroup, Pacific County Health and Human Services, Washington Labor & Industries, and the local food bank, according to Erika Hersey, a staff member at Pacific County Immigrant Support.

The primary purpose of the informative festivity was, "To provide information about resources available in North Pacific County to the immigrant community including access to health insurance, labor rights, library services, children resources, access to healthcare, access to vision evaluation, dispute resolution, WIC, services for children and families, and provide COVID-19 and flu vaccines," Pacific County Immigrant Support Staff Member Fabiola Merino told the **Herald**.

Pacific County Immigrant Support

is multi-faceted and it is driven by its volunteers. Hersey and Merino said the purpose and philosophy of PCIS is to "provide assistance and advocates for immigrants in Southwest Washington. We serve Pacific County's immigrant families,

involving 150-plus families. Our grassroots community organization effectively reaches the immigrant community with culturally and linguistically specific services. This includes information and training, outreach to workplaces with significant immigrant employees, and advocating for systemic change. We engage immigrants as community educators and navigators, elevating immigrant voices within PCIS leadership and in public presentations. PCIS provides access to information regarding local, state and federal services and programs available. We assist with USCIS N-400 naturalization and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) applications. We provide citizenship and English Language Acquisition classes to help applicants be ready for their civic naturalization test."

Asked what is the biggest problem facing those residing in north Pacific County that do not speak English?

See **IMMIGRANTS Page 5**

Merino said, "It is hard to express their needs or desires. The lack of communication can stop them from asking for the assistance or guidance they need, from a doctor appointment to report a crime. I think the issue is similar to any other place when you don't speak the language the majority does."

Merino said there are programs available to those who do not speak English. "Pacific County Immigrant support provides English Language Acquisition classes (ELA or ESL) twice a week, on zoom. Grays Harbor Community College also provides English Language Acquisition classes," she informed.

"The Community & Family Resource and Health Events focus on reaching out to the Hispanic community and it is open to the whole community so that everybody learns about services and resources available to the community in North Pa-

cific County," Hersey said "CHOICE Regional Health Network/Cascade Pacific Action Alliance, Pacific County Immigrant Support and Family Education and Support Services partnering and in collaboration with local organizations are leading the effort to provide access for marginalized and hard to reach populations of resources, health information, and COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations. This effort is replicated in a seven counties area that includes Pacific, Gray Harbor, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Lewis, Mason, and Thurston."

Any immigrants needing support in north Pacific County should contact PCIS at: info@pcisupport.org, by phone at 360-342-0014, toll free at 888-306-0547, or the website: pcisupport.org. To donate to PCIS, mail a check payable to PCIS at PO Box 156, Long Beach, Wash. 98631, or donate online at pcisupport.org/donate.

At the May 16 event, entertainment was provided by the musical duo of Buck and Elizabeth. Several items were given away free to anyone who attended including, food boxes containing broccoli, radishes, butter, toothpaste, shampoo and conditioner, bags of potatoes, cheese, English Cucumbers, hot dogs, bread, apples, onions, tacos, clothing, milk, children's books,

skin lotions, water, bar soap, deodorant, COVID test vaccines, free vision test and much more!

There were also several raffle items, including bicycles, speakers, tablet toys, an air fryer, plants, and name a few.

PCIS is planning on having another information event in north Pacific County in July or August at a location to be determined.