

Human Relations Awards Profile: Tony Espinoza

Tony Espinoza knew early in his teaching career that he would dedicate his life to mentorship and equity work. As an advocate, Tony is the voice for marginalized youth. As a mentor, Tony encourages and guides students so that they can find their own voice and begin advocating for themselves and others. What Tony has accomplished in 39 years of mentoring through Poudre School District and elsewhere is staggering, but Tony measures success primarily through the accomplishments of those whom he has mentored.

As a leader and a volunteer, his spirit is seemingly uncrushable. He acknowledges the challenges that come with equity work (bureaucracy, lack of funding, time constraints), but refuses to let those hurdles distract from the importance of mentorship for every youth. "Everyone needs mentors and positive role models," says Tony. "I will always feel that more can be achieved." His desire to constantly set new and more ambitious goals is just one aspect of what makes him such a crucial and effective leader and servant to his community.

When simply considering years of service, Tony's commitment to volunteerism is impressive enough, but what leaves its mark when interacting with Tony is how exuberant he becomes when discussing his hopes for Hispanic youth, whom he cites as the singular factor in driving his continued service. Tony says, "It's important to convey to our Hispanic/Latino youth that they are bright and talented and that we are very proud of them!" He strives to ensure the youth he mentors are confident and capable, and he encourages them to openly share their language and culture with others. This pride, conviction, and generosity of spirit are part of what makes Tony Espinoza such an asset to both Hispanic/Latino communities and the Fort Collins at large.