

LOCAL NEWS

BUFFALO

Month's events will focus on contributions of Hispanics

By MICHELLE KEARNS

NEWS STAFF REPORTER

A monthlong celebration of Hispanic contributions to the city begins at noon Tuesday with the opening of an exhibit and timeline chronicle at the Central Library.

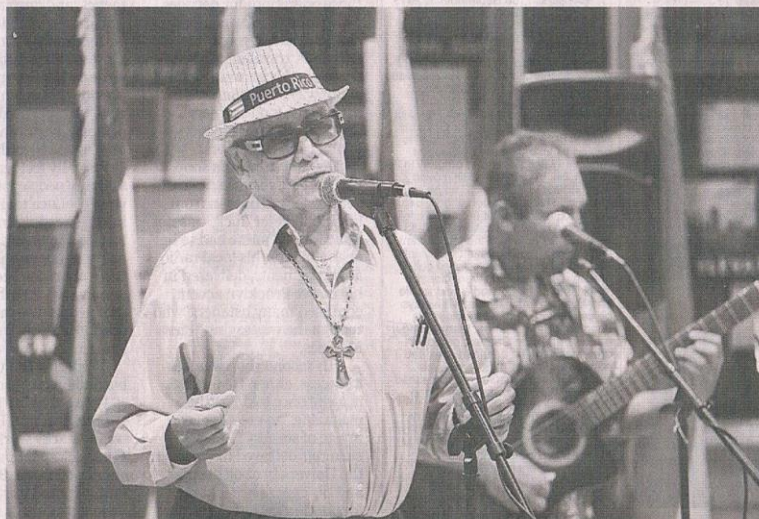
The history of local Hispanics was once so hard to find that Casimiro Rodriguez and other community leaders four years ago started collecting photos, news clips and recorded interviews to include in the annual commemoration.

"That's one of the reasons our organization was formed," said Rodriguez, chairman of Hispanic Heritage Council. "We wanted to institutionalize this like Black History Month," he said. "We want our children to understand their roots."

This year's Hispanic Heritage Month, which runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 17, will include the library exhibit of items from the new history archive, which is still being assembled by the Hispanic History Project.

"That will pretty much tell the story of

Musical pathway to Hispanic Heritage Month



Mark Mulville/Buffalo News

Eladio Rodriguez performs with the 3 Amigos before a program Tuesday kicking off Hispanic Heritage Month in Buffalo's Central Library. Also debuting was "Echando Raices: Hispanics Building a Life & Legacy in Western New York" - an exhibit coordinated by the Hispanic Heritage Council of WNY and the Buffalo History Museum.

"Latinos have been part of the fabric of Western New York since the late 1800s," he said. "They came to this area, just like all the other immigrants, looking for the American dream."

They come from Puerto Rico, as his family did, as well as from places like Mexico, Colombia, Cuba and Spain.

Though the local Hispanic community can sometimes seem invisible, the population in Buffalo is about 44,000 and the people deserve recognition, community leaders say. Hispanics fought in wars and became lawyers, doctors and teachers.

"They're hardworking people. They're people with humble beginnings. People that want to make a difference," Rodriguez said.

Puerto Ricans have been American citizens since Woodrow Wilson signed off on congressional approval in 1917.

Yet, Rodriguez, who was born here, can relate to immigrants.

Ongoing debates spurred by the presidential campaign and events in Europe can make it is easy to lose sight of what people are really about.

"I feel sorry for the undocumented folks," he said.

"They have the same passion to try and secure the American dream. They feel trapped."

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Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month in Buffalo & Erie County



September 15, 2015

12:00 noon

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library

1 Lafayette Square

Buffalo, New York

"Honoring Our Heritage. Building Our Future."

KeyBank