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No stranger to perseverance

[David Hendricks](#) - David Hendricks

Newly appointed U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Javier Palomarez sounds like any other small-business advocate when he lists his goals: to help Hispanic business owners provide health care insurance, to find business loans and investments and to build an educated, skilled work force.

Palomarez's journey to his new office on K Street in Washington may not have included owning a business himself. But as an inspiration to overcoming obstacles, hardly any business organization anywhere could find anyone better than Palomarez.

The numerous San Antonians who know him already understand.

Palomarez, 48, was the youngest of 10 children in the Rio Grande Valley when his father left the family. The mother, Elvia, a highly educated accountant from Mexico, had to raise the children. Unable to find bookkeeping work at first, Elvia initially worked as a maid during the day and janitor at night.

During the summers, the family became migrant workers, leaving Edinburg to work in fields as far away as Michigan and Indiana.

When Palomarez was in high school, Elvia died. He had to drop out of high school and work to help support his family and himself. But his mother had always stressed the necessity of education. "It was ingrained in all of us," he recalled. "There was never a lack of desire."

Helped by an English-as-a-second-language program, he obtained a high school-equivalent degree. Over time, he earned a finance degree from Pan American University, now part of the University of Texas System.

Palomarez started a marketing career, first with Allstate Insurance Corp., then with Sprint Inc. He came to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber after being vice president for multicultural marketing at ING Financial Services. He credits ING for its keen sensitivity to Hispanics, despite being a Dutch company with U.S. headquarters in Connecticut.

As an ING executive, he came to know San Antonio. He credits San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Ramiro Cavazos and San Antonio ad agency executive Al Aguilar with being instrumental in his appointment to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber, which advocates for 3 million Hispanic business owners belonging to 200 local Hispanic chambers.

Palomarez knows the San Antonio Hispanic chamber is the oldest, marking its 81st anniversary soon.

"San Antonio is an example for what American cities should be. It is well-balanced, well-run, growing and

vibrant,” he said.

“Here in San Antonio, we have witnessed firsthand the value of dedication, hard work and experience that Javier embodies,” Cavazos said when Palomarez was appointed by the U.S. Hispanic Chamber.

As Palomarez advocates in Washington to help small businesses insure their worker's health care and to find financing for expansion, he also counts on the member Hispanic chambers to inform the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of their local needs.


Palomarez intends to challenge all member Hispanic chambers to engage Hispanic youth in education-to-career programs.

Knowing that Hispanic business growth is the fastest in the nation, Palomarez also keeps an eye on the even faster rise in businesses owned by Hispanic women.

“It's an awesome movement,” he said. Thanks to his mother, Elvia, Palomarez knows why.

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