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Chicago Fire honors Gift of Hope employee as Hispanic hero

Elmhurst, ILL. (SEPT. 25, 2003) - The Chicago Fire named John Valencia, Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Network Hispanic Affairs/Corporate Partners Coordinator, a 2003 Hispanic Hero during a special half-time ceremony at Soldier Field Friday, Oct. 10.

The Fire honored Valencia, along with 49 of Chicago's most influential leaders in the Hispanic community, during the third annual Budweiser Hispanic Heritage Night ("Noche de la Herencia Hispana de Budweiser"). The event coincided with the soccer team's return to the newly renovated Soldier Field as they matched against the Columbus Crew, which kicked off at 8 pm. A pre-game musical festival began at 6:30 pm.

"We're delighted to honor these exceptional individuals -talented and hard-working people who have not only excelled in their respective fields, but who have also remembered to give back to their communities in so many special ways," said Fire General Manager Peter Wilt.

"Heroes de la Comunidad Latina" pays tribute to those who have made outstanding contributions to improve the lives of Hispanics living in Chicagoland and abroad. Valencia was nominated for his work with Gift of Hope, as well as his dedication toward building a strong foundation for the future of the Hispanic community.

"I am truly honored to receive this distinction," says Valencia. "I certainly didn't expect such recognition for doing something that I genuinely believe in?educating my community on organ and tissue donation."

Valencia addresses the cultural issues that prevent many Hispanics from saying "yes" to organ and tissue donation. His ongoing projects include a statewide Spanish-language campaign with Mexican singer Tatiana. Recently, Valencia coordinated donor awareness outreach among thousands of Hispanics attending La Ley's August anniversary celebration at Plaza Garibaldi, an outdoor venue in Chicago's Little Village community. More than 2,000 donor cards were distributed.

In the Hispanic community, Gift of Hope's Hispanic Task Force coordinates outreach and training programs with Spanish-language media, healthcare, community, educational, religious, civic and social organizations to increase awareness and acceptance of organ and tissue donation and transplantation in the Hispanic community.

Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network is the federally mandated not-for-profit organ procurement organization working with hospitals and families in the northern three-fourths of Illinois and northwest Indiana. Its main office is located in Elmhurst, Ill. For more information, call 888/307-DON8

Spanish speakers can call 877/577-3747 or visit the Web site's [Spanish-language section](#).