

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Marco Zarate, President and Co-Founder of North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals was Honored the Prestigious Ohtli Award by the Government of Mexico

Cary, NC, September 17, 2013 – The NC Society of Hispanic Professionals (NCSHP) is delighted to announce that on September 14<sup>th</sup>, the Consul General of Mexico in the Carolinas, the honorable Javier Diaz de Leon presented the prestigious Ohtli award to NCSHP President and Co-Founder, Marco A. Zarate during a ceremony to celebrate the CCIII anniversary of the Independence of Mexico.



The Ohtli Award is the highest honor bestowed by the Government of Mexico on a member of the Mexican or Mexican-American community. This award acknowledges and celebrates the altruistic dedication and constant professional activities done towards the empowerment and development of their fellow compatriots abroad.

In his speech, Consul Javier Diaz highlighted the hard volunteer work and dedication of Mr. Zarate for almost 15 years to promoting the education of Hispanic students in North Carolina with the NC Society of Hispanic Professionals. With this volunteer work; Mr. Zarate has been instrumental in the development, establishment, and management of first ever educational programs for Hispanic students in North Carolina. Specifically, Mr. Zarate's efforts with NCSHP have contributed to: 1) serving more than **11,000** Hispanic/Latino students from **more than 50 school systems** in North Carolina by offering scholarships, seminars, mentors, tutors, motivational presentations, and the annual Hispanic Educational Summit - the largest educational conference in North Carolina for middle and high school students; 2) awarding more than **\$200,000** in scholarships to **180 deserving and promising Latino students** through the NC Hispanic College Fund established in 2004 by NCSHP at Triangle Community Foundation; and 3) providing an annual forum (Hispanic

Achievement Conference and Workshops Initiative) for more than **2,700 teachers and school administrators from school systems across North Carolina** to discuss methods and practices to help Hispanic students overcome barriers to academic success.

In acceptance remarks, Mr. Zarate shared his upbringing in his hometown in Mexico, and related it to his unique passion for education, "When receiving this distinction, I cannot help to think back to almost 60 years ago...I am not a teacher but I have been around teachers all my life, even before I was born". Zarate remembered his mother, a Mexican teacher, who at the age of 18 founded her own clerical school that later became a middle school in his Mexican town in 1940, who raised her six children with his father, believing in the power of education. He also recognized his wife Susan, also a co-Founder of NCSHP, and American teacher who loves to teach English as a Second Language to Mexican and all immigrant children, and advocate for their education.

Zarate highlighted the importance of education as a catalyst and a means to increase the wellbeing of Mexicans and all immigrants in the U. S., "The future of Latinos in North Carolina is going to depend greatly on the academic achievement of Latino children and youth...When good things happen to Latino children, good things happen to North Carolina". "An investment in the education of a Hispanic student, an investment in our human capital, is an investment in North Carolina", Mr. Zarate said.

He also acknowledged the continuous noble work of hundreds of volunteers, members of the Society of Hispanic Professionals, and people of good will (Hispanics and non-Hispanics), that help Hispanic students succeed in school, graduate from high school, and pursue a higher education.

The Ohtli Award is granted once a year and consists of a medallion, a silver rosette, and a diploma signed by the President of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME), an institution that seeks to strengthen the bonds between Mexico and its diaspora. The word Ohtli means "path" in Nahuatl (language of the Aztecs), and this is what this distinction signifies: to open the path to progress. The title honors and recalls the continued tradition of Aztec descendants who still bid farewell with the phrase "Cualli ohtli!" (To have a good trail/journey).

*The North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals (NCSHP) is a statewide 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose only mission is to promote education among Hispanic youth. Acknowledging the under representation of Hispanic youths in higher education, and seeing the need for role models, it is the intent of the NCSHP to develop and secure educational opportunities and financial support to improve Hispanic youth's success and school performance.*