

Latina to lead Christian community development network

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Elia Moreno's journey began ten years ago when she first sought solutions for poverty in West Texas.

She discovered mentors in poverty experts Donna Beegle and Ruby Payne. Then she connected with Jimmy Dorrell, founder of Mission Waco and the [Texas Christian Community Development Network](#), whose poverty simulation opened her eyes to the potential found in Christian community development.

When the Texas Christian Community Development Network recently announced a leadership realignment, Dorrell and Moreno were named co-executive directors of the organization.

"I am so proud and excited to serve as co-executive director," Moreno said.

Moreno will focus on the Panhandle, West and North Texas, while Dorrell will direct his attention to South, Southeast, Northeast and Central Texas.

Transition in leadership

Rucker Preston, who became executive director of the Texas Christian Community Development Network two years ago, transitioned to a new role as the network coordinator, working on the [No Need Among You Conference](#) and other regional training events.

Moreno, founding director of Living Intentionally Ministries and the author

of *Permission to Rest* and *Living Intentionally*, noted her parents grew up in poverty and immigrated to the United States to seek better opportunities for their children.

She hopes to lead the Texas Christian Community Development Network to expand its advocacy role, particularly on issues related to immigration and the education of poor children.

“We want to learn how to advocate on behalf of education for those students living in poverty that deserve to be prepared to go to college if they choose to,” she explained.

As the Hispanic population continues to increase in Texas, Moreno said the network will seek to reflect that change.

“I will make a conscious effort to reach out to Hispanic churches and that community to engage and involve them in what we are doing,” Moreno said.

Truett grad will lead network’s board

Moreno stepped down from her position as president of the Texas Christian Community Development Network board to accept her new role as co-executive director.



Bethany Rivera Molinar

The board elected Bethany Molinar Rivera, youth and families program director of Ciudad Nueva, as its new president.

The realignment at the network reflects natural changes and a desire to use the strengths of all of the people involved, said Molinar Rivera, a graduate of Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary and Diana R. Garland School of Social Work.

"We want to be as diverse as Texas," she said. "Many times, churches and organizations seem to be 10 years behind everyone else, but we want to be diverse. And more than diverse, we want to be equipping, enabling and fostering leaders."

Until now, communication between churches and organizations participating in the network and the No Need Among You Conference has been primarily in English. Moreno said that could change in order to communicate with Spanish-speaking churches.

Regional training events are planned in Abilene on April 2 and in Houston on May 2. Moreno hopes to establish connections for more training conferences in other locations.

Instead of connecting with churches and attempting to get them to follow

an agenda, Moreno said, she intends to meet them and listen to what they have to say about their communities.

She hopes Hispanic Baptist churches with connections to other churches in their communities will help arrange meetings with network representatives.

“They are going to know the atmosphere and the temperature in their community—about what their needs are and what the conflicts are,” she explained. “So, we can say, ‘These are the skills that our board has, and we have heard of a speaker before who could address that particular issue.’”