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Vazquez departs as leader of Rochester Latino youth agency

CLAUDIA VARGAS • STAFF WRITER • JANUARY 16, 2009

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Mildred Vazquez, executive director of Puerto Rican Youth Development, recently recalled listening to New York Gov. David Paterson talk on the radio last April about the economic forecast.

"Hearing him say, 'Things will be rough, there will be budget cuts,'... I knew there was no other choice," Vazquez said of the realization that something had to change to enable PRYD to continue its services to Rochester-area Latino youths.

After 37 years as an independent agency, PRYD became a subsidiary of the Ibero-American Action League Inc. on Jan. 1; Vazquez's last day was Jan. 16.

Vazquez, who has led the agency for almost three years, said there is no need for an executive director at PRYD since it is under another leadership, and her salary can be used for various programs.

PRYD will continue to operate from its offices at 30 Hart St. but will be under the Children and Youth Services branch of the Ibero-American Action League, which has been serving Latinos in the Rochester area for more than 40 years.

Vazquez said that after listening to the governor's radio address in April, she met with Ibero's CEO Hilda Rosario-Escher to discuss PRYD's [financial](#) struggles.

"We went to Jines for lunch and then we left and cried sitting on the sidewalk and talked about what was going on," Rosario-Escher said about their April meeting. Soon after that, planning started on what was the best thing to do with PRYD.

A plan of action was established and it was decided that PRYD would become a subsidiary of Ibero-American Action League. Vazquez said PRYD always struggled financially but through various programs managed to carry on its mission of helping Latino youths and their families.

"The agency lacked the infrastructure to go after new grants. ... I was wearing all the hats: ED (executive director), CFO, HR," Vazquez said about PRYD. "The agency can be more of a force now."

Rosario-Escher said youth development is a big area of focus for Ibero this year, and with the PRYD under its wing now, she expects her agency to have a major impact on Rochester-area Latino youths.

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