

# Hispanics to become dominant minority

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi  
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Maintaining a strong emphasis on traditional values such as education and ensuring children remain bi-lingual to the extent that their heritage is preserved were two key thoughts of retired Chief Master Sgt. Joseph Parsons to more than 120 people who attended the Hispanic Heritage luncheon at the Charleston Club Monday.

Parsons, who spent most of his 28-year Air Force career in recruiting and supply and currently works as a district sales manager for a financial company, is a member of the Governor's Committee for Hispanic Affairs.

The theme of the Hispanic luncheon was "children...our hope for the future." The luncheon also featured a number of crafts on display from the various Hispanic cultures and music by the Hernandez brothers.

Parsons talked about the important moral values that are passed to children and he cited four areas that must be done well with children. "We need to teach them about the supreme being, provide them love and security at home. Ensure they carry a last name that they can be proud of and give them a good education. We owe them nothing else."

He said Hispanics, whom he defined as those from Spain, Cuba,

Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, Latin and Central America, would someday be the largest minority group in the United States. "According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanics comprised approximately 10.3 percent of the population in 1995 and today they already comprise 11.8 percent. In five years, Hispanics have grown from 27 million to 32 million and have grown by almost 5 million people in five years." Hispanic is not a race, but an ethnicity according to Parsons.

Charleston's workforce consists of three percent Hispanics with 104 Hispanics working at the base today. One of those Hispanics, Master Sgt. Edison Velez Jr., organizer of the luncheon and a loadmaster in the 14<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron, explains that these events help people to better understand their culture and heritage. "For my 22 years in the Air Force, I've always been involved in these types of events. We need to share our cultural experience with others to show our diversity and how we contribute to society."

Parsons talked extensively about the contributions Hispanics have made to the United States, citing a vast array of Hispanic entertainers, sports heroes and politicians as ample proof. "In 1998, our spending power was estimated to be \$350 billion. In 2010, our spending power will be \$432 billion."

He worries that more and more Hispanic families will abandon teach-

ing Spanish to their children and said that is a tragic mistake. He cited an old proverb on why it's important to teach your children to be bilingual: "success speaks many languages." He also said that bilingual ability allows your children to stay better attuned to their heritage and may even make them more employable.

"As Hispanics, we have strong cultural ties and prefer to speak in our own language, just like any other group of people. We prefer to do business with people we have something in common with, but our children have not learned Spanish and we need to look at the opportunity that will be lost."



Photo by Lt. Col Ed Memi  
**Edison, 7 (left), and Evelina, 10, display native Panamanian folklore dress during the Hispanic Heritage luncheon at the Charleston Club Monday. Hispanic Heritage Month is nationally recognized Sept. 15 through Oct. 15.**