

Hispanic rally welcomes youth

The Hispanic Young Adult Council organized a rally for Hispanic youth, “Explosion Juvenil” (Young Explosion), on Oct. 20 at the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center, Columbia.

Nearly 200 Hispanic youth attended the day-long event, which was designed to make them feel welcome, especially those not affiliated with any church.

“The purpose of the rally is to give a large welcome to young people who’ve never attended any type of church gathering,” said Georgina Vaca, coordinator of Hispanic Young Adult and Youth Ministry for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. “They might not feel welcome because of immigration issues or whatever, but we want them to know you’re welcome here. The best part was how the different communities came together. It was good times – very dynamic.”

“It was the first time that I had ever seen an event of this nature,” said Aurora E. Ortega, from Holy Trinity, Glen Burnie. “It was very impressive to see so many young people eager to serve God by putting on an event intended to welcome the young immigrant into the life of the Catholic Church.”

The council hopes that after experiencing that sense of connection and community, the youth will want to plug in to their local parish community.

The event began with music, games, and Mexican sweet bread, a traditional treat. A multimedia presentation focused on adaptation and acceptance. Four parishes offered small group presentations, and Ms. Vaca was particularly excited that a non-Spanish-speaking group from St. Francis of Assisi, Fulton, was putting on a demonstration. To solve the language barrier, the group opted to do a mime ministry.

“They were with us throughout the day, and the community knew they were non-Spanish speaking, and that was endearing to them,” she said.

Father Juan Antonio Puigbo, from the Archdiocese of Washington, spoke to the young adults about integration.

The day ended with the liturgy of the word, which included being silent with the Lord for 35 minutes.

“It was, in my opinion, one of the highlights of the day,” Ms. Ortega said. “I believe that it is in this type of event, in this type of welcoming atmosphere, that young Hispanic immigrants can realize that they are not alone and part of something greater.”