

Clara Reyes – Dos Mundos

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

Two worlds. When a person from one country comes into another one, it feels to them like they have entered another world. That feeling caused one woman to create a bilingual newspaper so as to help others through such transitions. She has gone on to provide outstanding leadership for the Hispanic community in the Kansas City region. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Clara Reyes is the founder and owner of Dos Mundos, which literally translated means Two Worlds. Dos Mundos is the Spanish and English language newspaper in Kansas City.

Clara grew up in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. She wanted to pursue a career as a dentist and graduated from the University of Guadalajara. In 1964, she traveled to Kansas City to explore pursuing her education in dentistry. While there, she met Manuel Reyes and a romance ensued.

After a brief courtship, he followed her to Guadalajara where they were married. Then they moved to his home area in Overland Park.

"When I came from Mexico, I didn't know any English," Clara said. She quickly found that tasks which came easy to a U.S. citizen, such as opening a checking account or paying a telephone bill, were monumental challenges for someone unfamiliar with the language or the culture. She wished she had a bicultural, Spanish-language aid to help her adapt to her new country.

Clara spent several years as a student, homemaker, mother of two and then a real estate agent in Kansas City. "I saw people from Mexico who wanted to buy a house but didn't know how to get loans or sign up for utilities," Clara said.

She set out to find assistance for them. "I went to the gas company and they said, 'Yes, we want to help and we have bilingual information, but we don't know how to disseminate it,'" Clara said. The Chamber of Commerce indicated something similar. "They said, 'We need some way to communicate with the Hispanic community,'" Clara said.

In 1981, with support of her husband and children, Clara began a bilingual newspaper which could help inform the Hispanic community. "We started with a typesetter in our basement," Clara said. The newspaper was called Dos Mundos, meaning two worlds. The company logo shows two globes connecting with each other.

Rather than producing the paper only in Spanish, she chose to use both Spanish and English. "We did it in bilingual form because we wanted others to read and know our needs also," Clara said.

Dos Mundos was the first bilingual newspaper in Kansas City. It has now grown to become the largest and most read Hispanic paper in the area. The company's market profile shows that the circulation region extends beyond Kansas City to rural communities such as Oskaloosa, Ottawa and Mound City, population 694 people. Now, that's rural.

Mrs. Reyes' company also operates three Spanish music and language radio stations in Kansas City. She is extremely active in community affairs.

Mrs. Reyes has served as President of the Coalition of Hispanic Women against Cancer, was a co-founder of the Southwest Boulevard Business Association, and has been a board member for the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City, the National Federation of Hispanic Owned Publications, the Salvation Army, and many more. She has also received the international Ohtli Award from the Mexican consulate in Kansas City.

"Clara Reyes was our Huck Boyd Lecture speaker several years ago, and it was so interesting to learn how she started Dos Mundos with the help of her husband and children," said Gloria Freeland, director of the Huck Boyd National Center for Community Media in K-State's A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications. "For more than 35 years, her publication has filled a real need in her community and beyond," Gloria said. "Her work demonstrates that communication can be used to unite people and strengthen communities."

For more information, see www.dosmundos.com.

Two worlds. Just as the Dos Mundos newspaper has helped to connect the Hispanic world with the English one, Clara Reyes has been a leader in connecting people in Kansas City. In doing so, she has made a world of difference.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.