

Advocates speak up to stop sexual harassment



The Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid in partnership with RGV Equal Voice Network and Fuerza del Valle Workers' Center announced the launched of the "Nuestra Voz/ Our Voice" campaign to bring local workers' voices into the #metoo movement and combat on-the-job sexual harassment in the Rio Grande Valley.



Fuerza Del Valle Community Organizer Rosa Sanluis, from left, Christina Patio Houle of RGV Equal Voice Network, and Texas RioGrande Legal Aid Inc. attorney Kathryn J. Youker hold a press conference Tuesday at Proyecto Juan Diego in Brownsville to launch a campaign against on-the-job sexual harassment in the Rio Grande Valley. (Miguel Roberts/The Brownsville Herald)

The campaign consists on outreach, community education and legal action. The TRLA is one of the 18 organizations that received funding from the national TIME'S UP fund to help low-wage workers.

"So, we will be doing a series of 'know your rights' workshops ... and we are also happy to provide workshops to any other group that is interested in receiving us," TRLA attorney Kathryn J. Youker said. "We especially designed curriculum to be very very user friendly and accessible to all different kinds of workers, it is available on English and Spanish and the idea is to spread the word and spread awareness as far and as wide as we can."

Network Weaver with RGV Equal Voice Network Christina Patiño Houle said the "Me Too" movement is much needed in the community and the campaign brings important attention to the region. She added the campaign will be an important resource for the region to make sure there is a platform for those who experience sexual harassment at work.

"Our communities face many challenges in the RGV, but we are constantly working to overcome them," she said. "The RGV Equal Voice Network is confident that 'Nuestra Voz' will be an important resource for our region, to make sure that we have the platform for those who experience sexual harassment in the work placed to be heard and for employers to know that this type of working conditions will not be tolerated."

Nuestra Voz/Our Voice is part of a three-pronged campaign that will also take place in El Paso and San Antonio. Legal workshops on sexual harassment, including information about how workers can protect themselves and their jobs, will take place at community centers throughout the three regions.

"Organizations will collaborate with other community partners ... to make sure this information reaches out to those who need it," Patiño said. "We have partners throughout the entire nation that work in low-income communities."

According to a 2016 U.S. government report, at least 25 percent and up to 75 percent of women experience sexual harassment at work, the press release for the campaign reads.

Rosa Sanluis, community organizer with Fuerza del Valle, said farm and domestic workers are the most vulnerable groups in the area. She said this campaign is a much needed resource for workers.

"These two groups are so vulnerable in the area and today we are very happy to start this campaign to stop sexual harassment in the workplace because we see it at our job how employees come with us and let us know how they have suffered sexual harassment while working," she said. "That is why this campaign is so important, because it is a response to this need workers have."

For more information about the campaign, visit trla.org.