!Buenas noches a todos! Good evening Everyone! It is an honor for me to welcome all of you to this wonderful celebration. A little over five years ago, I was invited to a small meeting to participate in a brainstorming session. The topic was the future of the Hispanic construction industry in Georgia. We were just getting out of a recession and many construction companies were struggling to stay in business. Two things were very clear for that small group of people: first, they had the opportunity to do something about it and second, it was up to them to make it happen. That's what leaders do. They take ideas into actions and they make things happen. Tonight, we are all witnesses of the transformation of that initial idea into a solid, well-established organization of more than 150 companies whose mission is to promote the Hispanic construction industry in the State of Georgia.

The Georgia Hispanic Construction Association takes pride in providing high quality educational programs that help a significant amount of construction businesses get prepared for success. We also facilitate business opportunities by hosting networking events through the year. Our membership has grown 30% in the past 10 months and there are no signs of slowing down any time soon. We are fully committed to assist small and medium size construction companies succeed. That's our ultimate goal and with the support of all of you we can make it happen.

I would like to thank all our sponsors, staff, volunteers and business partners for believing in our mission. Your contribution to this organization is not only valuable but necessary for us to be able to make an impact in the construction industry in Georgia.

And to the awards recipients… CONGRATULATIONS! YOU are the reason why tonight a record-breaking crowd of more than 300 people gather to celebrate. My sincere wishes that you continue being a model of perseverance, self-improvement and leadership in our Industry. I hope that you remember this event for many years to come.

One of my biggest heroes of all times is Roberto Clemente. For those of you that don't know who Clemente was, he was the first Latino baseball player to be inducted in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Bigger than his amazing abilities in the field, Roberto was an extraordinary human being, whose interest in helping others made him get on a plane full of supplies to personally deliver them to the victims of a devastating earthquake in Nicaragua in 1972. The plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of San Juan immediately after takeoff on December 31, 1972. Roberto died at 38 years old doing what he preached. He always said: "Any time you have the opportunity to make the difference in this world and you don't, then you are wasting your time on Earth".

We are fortunate that 5 years ago the founders of the Georgia Hispanic Construction Association decided not to waste any time. Their hard work and dedication throughout these years have certainly made the difference. To them and to all the people that have supported us, our deepest gratitude.

Thank you very much and enjoy the rest of the night!