

# Oregon State University Extension Service

# METRO CONNECTION

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## Introducing our RECAN member Hector Hinojosa



Throughout his childhood, there were always new people coming to dinner or staying the night at Hector Hinojosa's family home. "My parents were always finding someone in need," Hector said. "They instilled a sense of service by example and taught us to reach out to someone who might not be able to advocate for themselves."

Hector's parents dedicated themselves to serving their community. Their service projects were wide ranging, from advocating for Catholic masses in Spanish to pooling money for community members with unexpected expenses – everything from a broken transmission to sending a deceased loved one's body back to Mexico for burial.

This sense of service is part of who he is. Now retired and nearing his 70s, Hector volunteers with multiple organizations centered on Latino advancement. He also serves on RECAN, helping guide OSU Extension in the quest to provide culturally appropriate educational services and growth opportunities for residents across Oregon.

As a teenager, Hector benefitted from the Extension's then Youth Employment Program, which gave him the opportunity to earn extra money at an after-school job as a janitor. Hector ended up entering the job corps while in high school, earning his certification in metals fabrication and developing a leadership training program that landed him the opportunity to serve as a delegate to President Nixon's national youth conference.

From there, the motivated young man went on to study guidance counseling at Portland State University and worked 15 years in education. Hector pulled from his childhood experiences living in a migrant camp and began working in labor negotiations in the 1980s, eventually working with famed Latino rights activist and labor leader Cesar Chavez. "I loved that work – the adrenaline of the negotiations," said Hector, who advocated for the largely Latino employees of a food production company based in California.

His parents' illnesses brought him back to Oregon, where he continued to volunteer his time with various organizations, including OSU. It was through these efforts he tried to recruit and retain minority students as both a diversity committee member and through a mentorship program for high school students and their families.

Hector spreads the knowledge he gains from RECAN meetings into his volunteer work promoting better socioeconomic status, educational opportunities, healthcare, housing availability and social equity for Latinos. OSU Extension's work "has a rippling effect – I'm so proud and I love it," Hector said. "I believe in embracing change by participating in it and shaping it."