

Grantee Highlight

## Northwest Communities Education Center (KDNA)

How do you help farm workers and immigrants if they don't speak English and may have no legal standing to protect themselves in the courts or apply for government benefits like Medicaid? Ever since Ricardo Garcia marched with Cesar Chavez as part of the farm workers movement in the 1960s, he has devoted his life to answering this vexing question. In 1979, Garcia and other Mexican-American activists in the town of Granger, Washington, in the Yakima Valley, launched KDNA, a Spanish-language public radio station. "We're just like National Public Radio," Garcia says, "except our listeners speak Spanish."

KDNA (when voiced, the call letters spell out cadena, which means "chain" in Spanish) is much more than just a radio station. It is the center of community life in and around Granger. When Congress was debating immigration policy, hundreds of people flocked to the station to hear experts explain the issues, and thousands more listened to the broadcast on the radio.

Farm workers in Granger need weather information so they can decide when to pick asparagus or prune trees. Most don't have the Internet (except at KDNA's technology center), and the television news is in English, so they listen to KDNA. They want a say in what happens at their children's schools; KDNA brings school superintendents and education experts from the area once a month for interviews and to take calls from listeners. They want to learn English and apply for citizenship; KDNA offers classes to dozens of local residents free of charge.

To serve all these needs, KDNA is building new offices. The station has raised money, including a grant from the foundation, to fund construction on a headquarters that will also provide space for legal assistance offered by the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, domestic violence counseling through Consejo Counseling and Referral Service, a research institute looking into the health effects of pesticides, and several other organizations serving Spanish-speaking farm workers.

Over the years, the farm workers in Granger have grown increasingly loyal to KDNA. During the annual membership drive in May, they pour into the station to pay their \$20 dues. One man desperately wanted to show his support, but he simply didn't have the money. What he did have—because he is a talented wood worker—was a magnificent chest of drawers he'd built that is easily worth several hundred dollars. He hauled it to the station in his truck in the hope that KDNA would accept it as dues in lieu of \$20. He is now a proud member of KDNA.

