

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH El Mes de la Herencia Hispana September 15 – October 15

The Civil Rights Division is recognizing **Hispanic Heritage Month** throughout the month of October.



Employee Spotlight Eduardo J. Trevino-Rivera



Region 1 TDOT Operations District Specialist

He enjoys playing sports, hiking, camping, kayaking and Olympic Power Lifting. He spends time with family and friends at the lake or traveling seeking new adventures.

Joined TDOT June 2019

Tell us about a moment in Hispanic History that influenced or shaped your career/life?

I come from a small island in the Caribbean known as Puerto Rico, that has withstood not only a worldwide pandemic but has been beaten by natural disasters left and right since I was born. Puerto Rico through out history has been known as “La Isla del Encanto” which translates to “the Island of Enchantment”. Being immersed in this culture has influenced me in every aspect of who I am and how I view the world. How to treat your neighbor, and the ability to hone perseverance is something that I’ve learned through my Hispanic heritage.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

I’ve been blessed my whole life to have wise guidance from my parents and other knowledgeable mentors on every step of the way in my career and in my life. Its tough to pinpoint one individual, however my High School football coach, Todd Stevenson, has impacted me in so many ways. Not only on the football field where I was able to achieve success and then obtain a Bachelors degree, but in my everyday walk he has been influential. He has helped me strive for better things, challenge myself in everyway possible, and to not be complacent, but to always have a goal to work towards.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

Consistency and Stewardship are two of the values that resonates with me. For example, in football someone that is consistent in his job/duty no matter the difficulty and works hard to do it well, is always looked at as a great player. I believe this also can be applied in life, when staying consistent towards a vision or a goal. As Dwayne Johnson states, “Greatness will come”.

Why is it important to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, especially in 2021?

Every culture is equally important therefore taking time to spotlight each one throughout the year is an opportunity to learn more about each other. Hispanic heritage gives the chance for someone with a Latino background to discover more of themselves and their own history. Allows others to appreciate and go forth and inspire to achieve more. Learning cultural differences allows us to appreciate our similarities and our differences.

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Employee Spotlight Elizabeth Vance



Region 3 Human Resources, Administrative Assistant 2

She enjoys reading and traveling, when time permits.

Joined TDOT February 2016

Tell us about a moment in Hispanic History that influenced or shaped your career/life?

I could not say that there was a specific moment throughout history, but I can recall growing up, it was inspiring to see each year all of the accomplishments Hispanic people have contributed and achieved.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

My dad has been influential in the shaping of my career and goals. He's shown us what hard work and sacrifice is. I can remember when I was younger where he worked (3) jobs to provide for our family. He is a constant source of advice and will always be that mentor to me.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

Integrity is one that resonates with me as it is important to be honest and to have a degree of transparency in the workplace. This also holds true in diversity. It is imperative that we should have and maintain integrity in our dealings with one another.

Why is it important to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, especially in 2021?

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month is so important because it allows us to remember and acknowledge the important things done by the Hispanic community. It is good to acknowledge all good things that happen in society and to celebrate our differences and our different backgrounds.

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Employee Spotlight



Javier Reyes

Region 1 Operations, TDOT Operations District Supervisor

He loves to spend time with his family, and just welcomed his first baby boy who is now four months old. He also likes to work out and buy/sell real estate.

Joined TDOT November 2019

Tell us about a moment in Hispanic History that influenced or shaped your career/life?

I can't recall a specific moment in history that shaped my life, but my family has been a big influence on my life and has helped shape me into the person I am today. I consider them the reason for all my success and the drive I have to push myself.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

There have been a lot of mentors throughout my time at TDOT, too many to mention. I try to learn something new every time I interact with anybody. People within TDOT that have impacted my professional life in a positive manner include Mrs. Tracie Widner, Mr. Charles West, and Mrs. Kristin Qualls. They are exceptionally hard working and helpful people. TDOT Region 1 is full of great people from the top down.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

The TDOT Values: Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family are all important in getting our work completed in a safe and productive manner. I would have to say the family culture at TDOT is critical for me. It makes for a happy and productive workplace.

Why is it important to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, especially in 2021?

What makes Hispanic Heritage Month in 2021 so special to me, is being able to spend time with my family and realizing how blessed and lucky we are to have a strong bond. Going through the pandemic makes you realize how blessed you are to have your loved ones around you.

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Employee Spotlight



Melanie Gordon

Region 4 District 49 Administration—Arlington
TDOT Operations District Specialist

She loves to be active outdoors, whether that's shooting some hoops or going on a walk.; and reading both Christian and mystery books.

Joined TDOT June 2019

Tell us about a moment in Hispanic History that influenced or shaped your career/life?

The Mendez vs. Westminster case played a key role in making school segregation illegal.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

Jan Berry, she was an engineer at the Army Corp and encouraged me that women can be engineers too! She helped me find programs to be a part of and introduced me to Dr. Stephanie Ivey, who is a Transportation professor at the University of Memphis and has contributed a lot to the research field.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

I'm grateful that Safety and Family are core values to TDOT. Both values show intentionality and unity for all the employees.

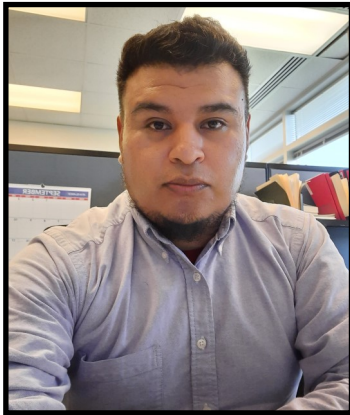
Why is it important to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, especially in 2021?

It is important to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month because we need to be reminded that we live in a very unique and diverse country that welcomes in different cultures from all over the world. We can take this opportunity to be educated and appreciate the differences in our cultures.

Tennessee Department of Transportation

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Employee Spotlight Macario Reyes



Region 1 Project Development, Transportation Project Specialist - Senior

He enjoys being outdoors, spending time with family and friends, watching his two boys grow and play soccer.

His hobby is collecting items with his sons that remind him of his childhood, like Lego sets, retro gaming systems, and soccer jerseys. Lastly, he enjoys leisure walks and hikes with his wife.

Joined TDOT January 2016

Tell us about a moment in Hispanic History that influenced or shaped your career/life?

For me there is not a specific event or moment, but indirectly it would be the work César Chávez accomplished with civil rights for agricultural workers. This work directly impacted my parents that worked in agricultural fields for many years. Seeing them construct what they have today from very little is the biggest impact and motivation that I have today. I believe stories like these are what Hispanic Heritage Month is all about, celebrating our differences and embracing our similarities.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

It's difficult to pinpoint one certain individual. There is definitely a lot of good people within TDOT that have in one way or another influenced me throughout my career. Overall, I would add that the individuals from my time in the Morristown Construction Office has played a major role and allowed me to demonstrate my capabilities and that experience really sticks.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

It would be family. From a personal standpoint, I wouldn't be where I am or the person I am without my family. This key component has taught me more than just right from wrong, learning to share with others or always having someone you can depend on. This aspect is key because it ingrains and forms the foundation on a person's identity and sets the stage to practice the remaining values.

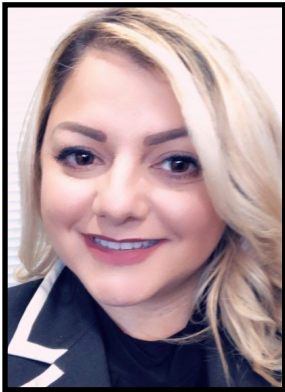
Why is it important to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, especially in 2021?

For me, every cultural celebration should be equally important. This mentally and openness should be observed and practiced so we can better understand one another. I believe when we take the time to genuinely learn from one another, we orientate ourselves in the right direction to better understand what is going on around us and act according. Lastly, I would like to invite everyone to take a moment and explore the contributions that Hispanics and all cultures have achieved to date and embrace the ones that are performed every day in this country.

Tennessee Department of Transportation

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Employee Spotlight



Naomi L. Alicea

Region 2 Project Development, Right-of-Way Agent

She enjoys spending time with family, cooking, painting, and traveling to different places to learn about diverse cultures. Also, she enjoys learning new languages; her goal is to learn a third language within a couple of years.

Joined TDOT December 2015

Tell us about a moment in Hispanic History that influenced or shaped your career/life?

My Hispanic origins have influenced my life. I was born and raised in Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans are known for their warm hospitality, often considered very friendly and family-oriented people who enjoy a rich Spanish influence. Being Hispanic has played a significant role in defining who I am and how I view the world. The family is of utmost importance to us; our frequent family gatherings and Hispanic traditions have influenced my experiences growing up. I cherish cooking unique traditional recipes passed down by my grandmother, mother, and aunts; plus, I like to share them with family and friends. Nothing is more flavorful and portrays my Hispanic heritage than a “*Pernil con Arroz con Gandules*” for our holiday parties. Puerto Ricans consider themselves American but are fiercely proud of their island and their culture.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

My husband plays a significant role in my life. He inspires me everyday to be the best possible version of me. He motivates me to be better, do better, do more with life, follow my dreams, be passionate, and never give up, no matter how hard the path might be.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

From the TDOT values, Family and Collaboration resonate the most with me. I believe that we all have different qualities and abilities that we can share from our diverse backgrounds. Celebrating our differences and common interest helps unite us and seeing ourselves as a family enhances our professional experience despite our differences.

Why is it important to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, especially in 2021?

This year's theme for Hispanic Heritage Month is *Esperanza*, which means Hope. I believe that celebrating Hispanic Heritage month in 2021 is exceptionally important because it gives us hope and inspires us to remember that we are stronger together. It also allows us to reflect on those who came before us, so we can preserve and create a better tomorrow.

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Employee Spotlight Phenelophe Michel-Garrido



Headquarters Finance Division, ASA 2

She loves to do yoga; it allows her to meditate and to stay focused while doing exercises. She also enjoys hiking and road trips. Once a year, the family takes road trips and visit different states.

Joined TDOT December 2018

Tell us about a moment in Hispanic History that influenced or shaped your career/life?

Though I don't have a specific moment in Hispanic history, but the moment that continues to shape my career and life is the story of Teresa Carreño. When I was just 13 years old, my father took me to the theater Teresa Carreño. I was delighted to be there, while we were walking through the theater, I asked him what Teresa Carreño had done in her life to have a theater named after her, he told me: Her love for music, dedication, perseverance and discipline led her to be a famous pianist in the 19th century. Her music was so beautiful that she performed for Abraham Lincoln and later for Woodrow Wilson. It was the first time I heard these 3 words together: dedication, perseverance and discipline.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

Jorge Perez-Eman, a great mentor of mine, reminded me again of what my father had taught me so young, half-done, rushed jobs go wrong—it's better not to do it. On the other hand, a job well done says a lot about you. It says that you must have had dedication, perseverance, discipline and, above all, love for what you did.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

The values I learned from my heritage directly aligns with the TDOT values of Consistency, Collaboration, and Family. To this day, I use those teachings and apply them to my work ethic to ensure that my work is of the utmost quality.

Why is it important to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, especially in 2021?

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage month is incredibly important especially in 2021 because it is crucial to recognize the path paved by Hispanics. The way that Hispanic culture infiltrates all aspects of life, even the American lifestyle, is important to know and understand. In order to have unity within a community, we must understand each other; Hispanic Heritage month is only a reminder of the work that Hispanics and non-Hispanics have ahead of them in order to become a unified collective.

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Employee Spotlight



Tina McCown

Region 4 Human Resources Division, ASA 4

She is an avid reader and currently learning about beekeeping in hopes to one day be a Master Beekeeper when she retires in the not so distant.

Joined TDOT August 2015

Tell us about a moment in Hispanic History that influenced or shaped your career/life?

Growing up with a Hispanic father, he instilled in his children the importance of family values and he taught us to respect the Hispanic culture. As a child, I was fortunate enough to live in Spain and learned valuable lessons about diversity, culture, customs and traditions that I will have for a lifetime.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

My mentor is my manager from a previous job. She introduced me to the field of Human Resources and offered me advice that made a difference in my life and changed the course of my career. At the time, I was a single-mother, working a night shift in production and she asked me to apply. That was in 2008 and I've been in Human Resources ever since.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

All eight values are important, but most importantly to me is integrity and family. Integrity, because it's important to have strong moral principles and that's what I hope to instill in my own family. The values that I instill in my family today will be passed down from generation to generation and these values will carry us throughout our lives and our work.

Why is it important to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month, especially in 2021?

I am very proud of my Hispanic heritage. To me, the Hispanic culture represents diversity, family values, and traditions.