

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Police Chief from Mexico Arrives in Salisbury Rowan to Assist Local Law Enforcement with Hispanic Relations and Cultural Understanding

Latino Initiative Team Dedicated to Creating Positive Impact in Salisbury Rowan Following Recent Trip to Mexico

Salisbury, NC – January 15, 2007 – The City of Salisbury announces the arrival of the former Chief of Police of Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato, Mexico, Benjamin Arturo Navarrete Ruiseco, to Salisbury Rowan. Upon his arrival on Sunday, January 14, Navarrete, currently an instructor for Guanajuato, Mexico Police Academy, began delivering an extensive six-day training and cultural awareness regimen with instruction aimed at providing local law enforcement personnel in Salisbury, Concord, Kannapolis and Rowan, Union and Cabarrus County with a better understanding of the Hispanic culture. The visit represents part of a multi-faceted action plan which is being created by a three-county task force, following a September 2006 trip to Mexico. The south of the border trek, entitled the “Latino Initiative”, was established through The Center for International Understanding at the University of North Carolina and strives to provide NC leaders with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural, political, social and economic issues impacting the Hispanic community. By providing municipalities with the necessary resources and information to create practical solutions to problem solving, the Center endeavors to support the successful incorporation of immigrants into communities.

Prior to embarking on the trip, members involved in the Latino Initiative Task Force, agreed to serve their respective communities as a viable resource regarding immigrant integration, upon their return. In addition, the team members vowed to pull together and utilize “lessons learned” while in Mexico, to identify city and county issues which required immediate attention. Following the trip, team members worked diligently to formulate a 2007 action plan aimed at positively impacting Hispanic relationships throughout the area. Local law enforcement officers serving on the task force reflected positively on the vast insight and extensive knowledge which they had obtained from Navarrete during their recent trip to Mexico. The thirty-two year old Mexican native had been eager to share his broad knowledge of the Hispanic culture and to offer practical solutions for assisting local law enforcement officials in bridging communication gaps with Hispanic residents. It was highly regarded and agreed that Navarrete’s background, sharing of

information and insightful guidance could be utilized as a positive training tool for assisting local North Carolina law enforcement officers. The City of Salisbury hosted a luncheon meeting during November 2006 in which Salisbury/Rowan, Concord/Kannapolis and Cabarrus and Union County law enforcement received a Latino Initiative presentation regarding the recent trip. Law enforcement representatives, who had served on the recent contingent to Mexico, reflected on the excellent opportunity to support local officers by offering training sessions through Navarrete. After an in-depth discussion, all in attendance agreed to co-host the former police chief for a week-long training session in efforts to step-up law enforcement relations during 2007.

Having arrived on the afternoon of Sunday, January 14th, Navarrete began his week by attending the 21st Salisbury-Rowan Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast Celebration. Navarrete reflected on his sincere satisfaction and enjoyment as he received the opportunity to experience over 500 people of various race and ethnic backgrounds during the celebration and promotion of race relations in Salisbury/Rowan. During his stay, Navarrete, a former Security Forces member, at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, will be hosted each day by various law enforcement agencies. By sharing his unique perspective as a former Hispanic police chief, Navarrete hopes to promote a better understanding of the Hispanic culture to local law enforcement personnel. This program which highlights staff development and the creation of awareness, has the potential to benefit law enforcement personnel throughout a three-county area, members of the Hispanic communities, and impact the safety of all of our citizens. In addition, Chief Navarrete is excited with regards to the opportunity to learn from a highly talented assembly of local law enforcement professionals.

Salisbury Mayor Susan Kluttz, a member of the Latino Initiative task force who traveled to Mexico during the fall of 2006 shares, "I am impressed with the insight of the leadership of law enforcement in these cities and counties to recognize the value of providing additional staff development to their staffs in acquiring a better understanding of the Hispanic population. As this particular population increases in our communities, better understanding will obviously improve how services are provided to our entire population, keeping everyone safer. This is a new idea in the expansion of the Latino Initiative, a program which has been in existence in North Carolina for the last seven years. I applaud the leadership of the Salisbury Police Department, the Rowan County Sheriff's Department, the Concord Police, the Kannapolis Police, the Cabarrus Sheriff's Department, and the Union County Sheriff's Department, for agreeing to participate in a new concept which could help not only relations with the Hispanic population but the entire three-county region." Mayor Kluttz, a strong proponent of race relations, diversity and inclusion adds, "I am most grateful to Chief Navarrete for taking a week out of his busy schedule to come here to assist us, and to the UNC Center for International Understanding for providing this educational experience to our local team which gave us the ability to be introduced to professionals, such as the Chief, to assist us as we continue to search for ways to make our community a better place for all of our citizens." Navarrete will depart for his home of Dolores Hidalgo, Mexico on Saturday, January 20.

In addition to Mayor Kluttz, other local Salisbury Rowan leaders who participated in the 2006 Latino Initiative were: Yvonne Dixon, Diversity Coordinator for Rowan Regional Medical Center; Kyna Foster, Manager of Community Affairs for Food Lion; Cheryl Marsh, Dean of Pre-college Studies at Rowan Cabarrus Community College, Lillian

Morgan, Director of Migrant Education/Title 1/ESOL for the Rowan-Salisbury Schools; and Nancy Wyrick, Vice-President of F&M Bank. In addition, local County and City government representatives include: Jim Sides, Vice chairman of the Rowan County Board of Commissioners; Scott Flowers, Master Deputy for the Rowan County Sheriff's Department; Susan Kluttz, Mayor of the City of Salisbury and Ruth Chaparro, Director of the City's Multicultural Division and liaison to the Salisbury-Rowan Hispanic Coalition.

During their trip to Mexico, team members had the opportunity to spend time with host families and to experience the Latino culture. The group met and interacted with political and civic leaders and numerous service agency representatives. Task force members met the governor of Guanajuato and visited both urban and rural areas throughout the state. Guanajuato is the home place for many Latino immigrants currently living in Salisbury Rowan. Studies conducted at The Center for International Understanding show that North Carolina currently has the fastest growing Latino population of any state, and that most of the state's newest residents arrive from Mexico. Among the extensive goals of the Latino Initiative, is the opportunity to develop a multi-disciplinary network of leaders interested in investigating the challenges of incorporating immigrants into strong North Carolina communities.

Ruth Chaparro, City of Salisbury Multiculturalism Manager interjects, "My vision is to see the community embrace the cultures that are present and those to come. My hope is to share the experience of the trip with as many people as we can. After this message is shared I hope to team up with people, organizations, and clubs which will allow us to combine forces in a positive way." Chaparro, the only Hispanic who made the trip from Salisbury Rowan adds that the mission of the journey had one all encompassing purpose. "We were extremely privileged to have the opportunity to learn and network with other leaders in nearby cities and then bring back information to support our distinct community" Chaparro hopes that the team can continue to focus on the mission of the trip which was to observe, learn and bring back to the community.

The Latino Initiative received grant funding from the Robertson Foundation and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. For more information regarding the City of Salisbury and its services and departments, please visit us on the World Wide Web at www.salisburync.gov.

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