

# Dare to Dream Conference empowers Latina middle school girls

The 11th annual Dare to Dream Conference, geared towards preparing young Latinas to further their education, was held at the McAninch Arts Center, College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn on Jan. 26. Despite the bitter cold, we had 278 girls and 232 mothers/parents/mentors in attendance from schools representing DuPage County, Suburban Cook County, and one from Iowa. The students heard Latina role models speak of their careers and how they dealt with obstacles to achieve their dream of a better life through higher education. They also attended student life panels where they heard from Lati-

na high school panelists and college panelists on their challenges and achievements as well as moments of perseverance. There was also a separate program for moms.

Almost 25 schools attended including: Blackhawk Middle School, Chippewa Middle School, Churchville Middle School, Indian Trail Junior High, and Wood Dale Junior High.

## Conference highlights

Highlights of the conference were Lombard Deputy Chief Cyndy Velazquez's keynote speech on motivation to pursue a career and Dr. Eiliana Silva's topic on Suicide Preven-

tion. The Moms' program speakers were Diana Diaz-Espindola – Effects of Negative Communication; Teresita Marsal-Avila – Immigration; Elizabeth Gómez de la Casa – Financial Assistance; and Laura Pineiro, M.D. – Women's Health.

At the end of the program, the Mothers/Parent and daughters created and exchanged a letter on how they will help each other to achieve their dreams and the emotions that each expressed were priceless. Girls who attended will also receive a personalized certificate from State Representative Kathleen Willis for their participation.