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## Conference reaches out to Youth In Crisis

One way to inspire at risk youths to better themselves and work to create a better future for themselves and their own families is to bring role models into their community. If only for a day or a few hours young people can meet and listen to people they relate to who have overcome the odds and prospered in life, they themselves might begin to find the courage necessary to complete their educations, build businesses and reach out to those who come after them.

With these goals in mind, the DFW International Community Alliance and DCET/Believe in Yourself, Inc. presented Youth In Crisis, a Spanish Conference to Help Youth and Families Prevent or Overcome Drug and Alcohol Addiction and Family Violence.

Despite cold unpredictable weather, families traveled from around Texas and Oklahoma to listen to Spanish author and bestseller, Carlos Cuahtémoc Sánchez, as well as guitarist and singer, Tony Melendez. Nearly 3,000 individuals attended the event in the Irving Bible Church on Feb. 14.

"The event was a success," Elvia Wallace-Martinez, DCET Executive Director and Founder, said. "These two artists are so well known throughout Latin-American countries they are like idols. Carlos changes people's lives the minute they read *A Desperate Cry*. When I read that book, I thought that is my life, and that was 15 years ago. Inspired to make changes in my own life, I went from being a workaholic to starting DCET. After I read Carlos' book, I went to study at his insti-



Bringing inspiration to young people, Tony Melendez, who was born without arms because of his mother's use of thalidomide, plays guitar and sings on stage.

"We have been trying to get Tony Melendez to perform at one of our events for four years. Tony was affected by thalidomide and he was born without arms. One day when he was little the other children were playing Frisbee and making fun of him. As they were playing, he reached out with a foot and caught the Frisbee. From that point on he knew he could do a lot.

"Earlier during the event, we received 10 proclamations from different mayors represented by councilmen who attended today," she said.

The latest National Survey on Reading conducted in Mexico shows that Mr. Sanchez is the most widely read author in Mexico, and his books are the most-read books after the Bible.

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"The Hispanic community has a big necessity to identify and follow their culture," Mr. Sanchez said through an interpreter. "We are grateful for this conference, because the young people are not doing what they are supposed to be doing. The parents need to pay attention to their kids. When parents, especially the mothers, are not paying attention to kids they become involved with drugs and bad things. If the mothers pay attention instead of working so much, the kids will learn to do the right things. Parents need to wake up and take care of their kids."

Performer and guitarist, Tony Melendez, has faced a host of challenges in his life that most people never encounter.

"I know that I can transmit a different perspective to these kids and help them change their attitudes, perspectives and beliefs,"

Mr. Melendez said. "Coming to Youth In Crisis impacts youth's lifestyles and will convince them that it is possible to change, to be better.

"I want to help them change mentally and physiologically. Our youth suffers consequences, and they need positive role models in order to change their thinking. I feel I can be an example about everything is possible with determination and the will to do things right. Kids cannot deny that drugs affect you mentally, physiologically and physically. I am a result of drug usage.

"I hope the audience left with a message of 'I can do it!' I tell everybody, who tells me, 'Tony, I can't do it, or I can't reach these objectives.' I tell them, 'Please do not tell me you can't.' If I can do it with out arms, look at yours lift them up and sav, 'Yes, I can. I will do it.'"

In addition to featured artists, the event offered a health fair, Mariachis and Folklorico.

"Throughout this past 10 years it has been our pleasure to bring to Irving, Texas educational programs that help people succeed," Mayor Herbert Gears, DCET Board President, said in a statement. "Proceeds from this event will benefit DCET literacy

programs. We are proud to be of assistance to our community, especially to people who need help with learning to read. By supporting literacy, this event will help not only our city, but our country."

**Celebrities encourage youth to tackle challenges**

Presenting a blur of color, FAMA students demonstrate a traditional Folklorico dance at YIC event

