

# Be A Leader Foundation

Gary and Melissa Trujillo, founders

**Mission:** To increase the number of college-going students by empowering them to become college bound, focused and prepared through leadership training and mentoring.  
www.bealeaderfoundation.org

## When/why did you start Be a Leader Foundation?

"We have been helping inner city youth for more than 18 years. We officially started the foundation in 2002. We believed that it was important to provide information about going to college to both elementary and high school students as early as possible to increase their personal desire to attend a university. In addition, we believed that it was important to get the whole family involved by creating Be A Leader Clubs for students and parents."

## What is your role and involvement in the day-to-day operation of the organization?

"We are actively involved in sharing the mission of the organization with educators, school boards and superintendents as well as parents. In addition, we both participate as facilitators and teachers for the Saturday workshops. As Executive Director, Melissa is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the organization and its employees."

## Plans for the future:

"BALF plans to expand its programs into the East Valley over the next six months and is working with southern Arizona school districts to implement the programs from Casa Grande to Tucson. We also believe that our programs are capable of being expanded into other urban cities across the nation."

## Advice to other social entrepreneurs:

"Be passionate about your work! Believe in yourself and your mission! Rally others who can help you implement your ideas into reality!"

## Programs offered by the foundation:

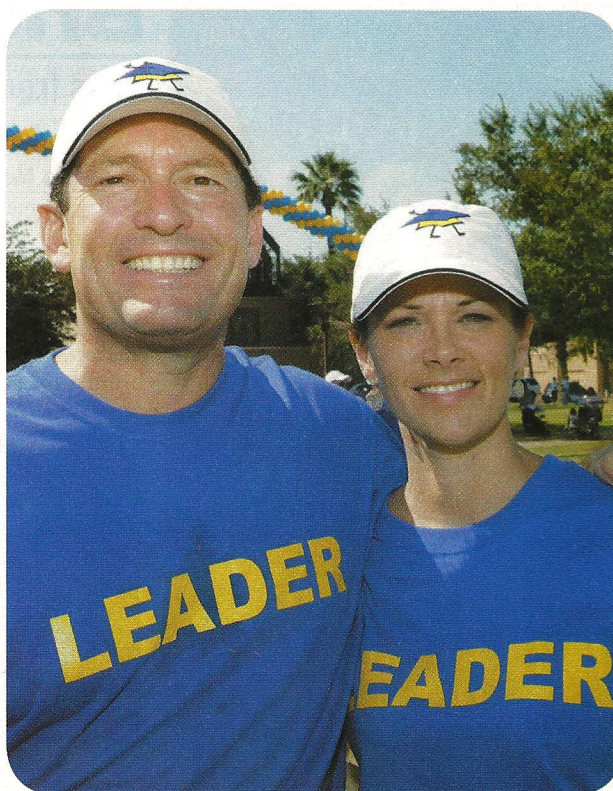
Annual "Taking Steps Towards College Success" Walkathon; Youth Leadership Conferences (YLC), middle school students; Be A Leader Institute Elementary (BLIE), 7th graders; Valedictorian Club (V-Club), 8th graders; Be A Leader Institute High School (BLIH); Be A Leader Institute College (BLIC)

## Number of children foundation has served:

BALF annually works with more than 500 elementary, high school, college and graduate students.

## Greatest challenge BALF has overcome?

"The greatest challenge for the organization has been to fulfill the need to provide college-going material to all inner city youth. It is clear that the BALF programs are fulfilling a great need to help these youth become college focused, prepared and bound. Currently, the programs are in the Phoenix metropolitan area but the organization has come to appreciate that the need is throughout Arizona."



## How can one contribute?

"The most powerful and meaningful contribution that one can provide is his or her time by mentoring one of our current program participants. All of our Be A Leader students, whether in elementary, high school, college or graduate school, need mentors to help them make good decisions about their education and their career development choices."

"Any interested person or organization can help BALF out by becoming active mentors to inner city youth. Their commitment will help students become college focused, prepared and bound."

 **Suggest an entrepreneur**  
Send information to [editor@latinopm.com](mailto:editor@latinopm.com)