

On Saturday, Marion will host a festival celebrating Latinx culture and promoting ways to reduce **language** barriers for some of **McDowell** County's population.

The Youth Summit Festival will be held from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Marion Community Building, at 191 N. Main St. in Marion, said Steven Navarrete. Navarrete is an intern with Centro Unido Latino-Americano (CULA), a local nonprofit based in Marion.

CULA works toward educational, economic and recreational opportunities for the Latinx community in the area, according to CULA's website.

"We will be celebrating education, culture and civic engagement," said Carlos Lopez with CULA. "Different groups of our local students will be presenting to our local city council members on topics such as safety, economic development, cleanliness and **language access**."

This event will be open to the community and is an opportunity for young people to get connected with their local government, be involved in civic engagement and develop presentation, communication and leadership skills, Lopez said.

The festival will have the food truck Tacos Fuentes and dancers from Baile Folklórico for entertainment. Ellie's Cake will be selling dessert.

CULA has also invited colleges from throughout western North Carolina to have a table at the event, as well as other members of the community. The deputy director of diversity, equity and inclusion for the office of Gov. Roy Cooper, Cristina España, has been invited to attend, Navarrete said.

Representatives from Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Warren Wilson College, the Foothills Food Hub and Piedmont to Peaks Girl Scouts will participate.

The event will focus on the city's **Language Access** Plan which has been in the works since 2023. The LAP has been developed between the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the city of Marion and CULA. This plan directs the city of Marion to create more multilingual resources and have more bilingual staff. The goal is to make Marion a more welcoming community for people whose second **language** is English, Lopez said.

"The LAP is very important to us here at Centro Unido and our goal for this event is to create system change here in **McDowell**," Navarrete said. "For many years, much of the population of **McDowell** could never be reached and the community has had to face many **language** barriers that burden their daily lives. That, however, will be changing and we hope to celebrate this positive change."

For more information, email Navarrete at vidaactiva@centrounidomcdowell.org or Ari Hanson at intern@centrounidomcdowell.org.

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