

Quinceañera program honors five young women

Local teens are Cinderellas for an evening at Olvera Street ceremony.

BY BILLIE JORDAN
SPECIAL TO THE WAVE

LOS ANGELES — Dignitaries of the Latino community, with the support of Walt Disney Home Entertainment honored five young Latinas at the Community Cinderellas Quinceañera, a com-

ing-of-age ceremony, recently at historic Olvera Street Plaza.

In support of highlighting positive Latina role models, a network of organizations presented the girls to the Latino community and society and celebrated their accomplishments and their entrance into womanhood.

"We thought this was important," said Margie Hernandez, on behalf of Walt Disney Home Entertainment. "The girls wouldn't normally get this type of attention. Shining a positive light on our youth is a passion I share with

Walt Disney Home Entertainment."

Community organizations submitted their nominations of young girls who met the criteria of exceptional students, contributors to their families and to the Latino community. A select panel of judges from the community tackled the submissions and narrowed them down to the five most outstanding.

"It was amazing to me that girls this young had such a sense of responsibility, not only to themselves but to their families and to

their community. It blew me away," said panelist Zenaida Mendoza, owner and president of Nuevo Ink Design. "Especially since schooling was never traditionally a priority for girls in Latino families. I liked the fact that Walt Disney gave us the opportunity to highlight them."

The five finalists chosen for their academic excellence and service to the community were twins Natalie and Crystal Carrillo, 16; Eunice Hernandez, 14; Luz Rodriguez, 17 and Rocio Rodriguez, 17.

"These girls really are like Cinderellas," Mendoza said. "They're hard-working girls, I'm sure they'll have their happy ending."

Each of the girls have aspirations that collectively cover the sphere of community service careers including teaching, politics, big business and the health service industry.

"I want to come back to my community and give a helping-hand," Natalie Carrillo said. **See CINDERELLAS on page A2**

Teen role model honored

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said. "This event was a celebration of the success and unlimited potential of five exceptional young ladies," Los Angeles City Councilwoman Wendy Greuel said. "These young ladies were treated to an evening of glamour to celebrate their evolution into womanhood and to honor their commitment to their communities and to themselves. They are truly the leaders of tomorrow."

The word Quinceañera comes from the Spanish quince "15." A Fiesta Quinceañera is a rite of passage for 15-year-old

Latina girls. The young girls are symbolically escorted into womanhood by their families and friends and the event is witnessed by their community. The origin of the Quinceañera is often attributed to the ancient customs of Aztecs, but the ceremony and meaning behind it is similar to other ancient cultural initiation rites that occurred throughout the world.

The ceremony embraces religious traditions and the virtues of family and social responsibility. The custom is still a celebration of the young girl and a recognition of her journey from

childhood to maturity.

It is said that traditionally, immediately after the ceremony, the young girls are treated like women, as if they have magically walked through the doorway from childhood to maturity.

"We wanted the main goal of the 'Community Cinderellas Quinceañera' to highlight the positive things that Latina women are doing as well as a coming-of-age ceremony," Hernandez said. "We didn't want to limit it to 15-year-olds, so we expanded it a bit. The important thing is that they get recognition."

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Luz Rodríguez, Crystal Corrilo, Rocio Rodríguez, Natalie Corrilo and Eunice Hernandez dress like Cinderella awaiting her carriage for festivities in their honor at Olvera Street recently. They were honored as positive Latina teen role models at a quinceañera-like event at the historic Pico House.