

Courting Latinos at Chevy Chase Bank

Monday, May 26, 2008; D02

“Hablamos su idioma,” or “We speak your language,” is the message Chevy Chase Bank is trying to convey in brochures, on name tags and across business cards, and as the sign-off of the bank’s Spanish call-in line.

The Bethesda bank, the largest with local headquarters, is courting the region’s Latino community, having opened 26 Latino banking centers since September.

At the center of this endeavor is the bank’s director of Hispanic banking, Enrique Carrillo, 41. Carrillo was hired two years ago from Comerica Bank, which moved its headquarters from Detroit to Dallas last year.

The son of Cuban natives, Carrillo made his backyard party, “la pachanga cubana,” a staple of his efforts to woo Detroit’s Hispanic business community.

Carrillo has brought the party to Washington, hosting his second pachanga this month. The goal of the networking event, with ropa vieja (shredded flank steak) and minty mojitos and staged in Carrillo’s expansive Ellicott City back yard, is to get local government officials, embassy representatives and small-business owners mingling over food, drinks, cigars and casual talk. More than 100 people showed up, an improvement over last year. Carrillo had expected more but said he was fairly pleased with the turnout given a midafternoon downpour.

The bank’s new initiative is not all marketing and festivities, however. Carrillo said he plans to roll out financial-literacy workshops at the banking centers next month, for both customers and noncustomers. The classes will cover the basics, from how to manage a checking account to homeownership, he said.

-- Alejandro Lazo

Enrique Carrillo, Chevy Chase Bank’s director of Hispanic banking, hosts



a Cuban-style backyard party to get local government officials, embassy representatives and small-business owners mingling.



Enrique Carrillo, right, greets Senen Semidey of President Cigars.