



News Release

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From Bus Boy to Entrepreneur: Juan’s Story

Century College alum Juan Vázquez of North St. Paul arrived in this country as a poorly educated teenager who spoke little English. But he was willing to work, and he was willing to learn – two qualities that have served him well.

Today Vázquez is the founder of a website that helps connect car sellers with car buyers – at no cost to either sellers or buyers. Called [lacochera.net](#) (translated: The Garage), the site is similar to [Car Soup.com](#), except it is in Spanish. Vázquez makes his revenue through his website advertising and charging dealers to use his service.

“It is a good concept that is catching on,” said Vázquez, who launched the site a year ago and recently upgraded the graphics and navigation. “Our inventory is increasing, and the number of visits is increasing.”

Vázquez said his site is intended to serve Hispanics who may be more comfortable making car deals in their native language.

Vázquez knows the feeling. He left Guanajuato, Mexico at age 15 to escape “a sense of emptiness” and poor job prospects. In Minnesota, he worked long hours as a dishwasher and bus boy while also learning

English at the Ronald H. Hubbs Center. Armed with his GED and encouraged by instructors who assured him that he was college material, Vázquez enrolled in Century in 1997 and went on to earn his Associate in Arts degree. Later, he attended the University of Wisconsin River Falls and earned a business degree.

“It was Century’s ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teachers who really made the difference for me,” said Vázquez. “They were tough, but respectful. They empowered me – that is the legacy I have from Century. When you have all these smart, creative people telling you that they have faith in you, you can’t fail. You want them to share in your success. You want them to be proud.”

Throughout his college career, Vázquez made a point of getting to know each of his instructors. “I always sat close to the front and asked them questions after class,” said Vázquez. “That strategy paid off.”

Now married with two small children, Vázquez said the urge to become an entrepreneur is in his blood. “I have to try this or I would not be happy with myself,” he said. “It was my education that gave me the courage to try.”

With Hispanics making up the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, Hispanic use of the Internet is also growing. “I wanted a website that will give people all the best features, including local news in Spanish,” said Vázquez. “The response from the community has been very good.”



Photo: Juan Vázquez and his moving billboard.