

## National *hermanas-*act *Las Fénix* to headline MidWest LatinoFest

By Kevin Milliken for *La Prensa*

A Houston-based, five-sister band will headline the entertainment at this year's *MidWest LatinoFest* on Saturday, June 8, 2013, noon to 11 p.m. at Promenade Park in downtown Toledo.

*Las Fénix* will take center stage at 9 p.m. The five Rodríguez sisters feature Tejano and regional Mexican music popular in *La Frontera* in a repertoire that festival organizers hope will appeal to Latinos of all ages and backgrounds.

According to the band's biography, *Las Fénix* started unofficially in 1999, when four of the sisters surprised their father *David Rodríguez* on his birthday by singing a couple of songs. He now manages the band with support from the entire family. *Sr. Rodríguez* has recorded his own music as a solo act in the past—mainly to pass out to family and friends. He is originally from Uruapan, Michoacán, México.

*Nadia*, 23, plays bass guitar. *Lesli*, 22, is one of the lead singers and plays the Bajo Quinto guitar. *Adela*, 21, plays the drums. *Berna*, 19, is a lead singer and plays the accordion. The youngest sister *Anahi*, a 12-year-old still in junior high school, only recently joined the band and plays percussion. She also tours with the band when she's not in school.

"At the beginning, she wasn't really into it. But whenever we would sign posters or pictures, she was right there next to us," said *Adela*. "So when she was signing pictures, my dad was like—'if you're going to be in the pictures, why not be in the band?'" So she joined and it's a lot of fun having her around. But she really doesn't like to practice that much. She does a good job and hanging around us now has a better understanding of what it takes."

"I'm happy and I'm excited to be in the band," said *Anahi*, who admitted she looks up to her older sisters. "When I'm not there, our fans get all mad because I'm not there and I like that."

*Anahi* admits she "gets special attention" from her dad because she is so much younger than the other members of the band.

"My dad, he pushes the others to do their best, but not so much me—because my sisters do that instead," *Anahi* said. "I like the fact many of our fans are younger kids like me."

### Education is important to the Rodríguez family

The older four girls take online college courses part-time. *Nadia* is studying accounting. *Lesli* hopes to go to law school someday. *Adela* wants to be a veterinarian. *Berna* plans to become a teacher. *Anahi* already plans to go to

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*Las Hermanitas Rodríguez: Grupo/Onda Las Fenix de Michoacán, México y Houston, Texas chosen to headline MidWest LatinoFest, June 8, 2013 a parque Promenade en el centro de Toledo.*

medical school and become a doctor.

"We know this won't last forever, so we aspire to other things," explained *Nadi* by phone from the band's Houston office. "We're having fun while it lasts and sharing it with our family. We're never alone. This is a really great, great thing in our lives and it keeps us sisters together."

The band's performance will be the first time in Toledo, but they'll make a second stop the following day in *Cincinnati*. *Las Fénix*, has released five CDs to date, including its latest effort, *Perfume*. A sixth, as-yet untitled CD will be released sometime this summer. It is described as half cover tunes from the 1990s and the other half original songs penned by the band's producer and another songwriter. But the band does write many of its own songs that have appeared on prior releases.

"So we're giving our audience songs that they know, songs that were really well-done but we do them in our own style," said *Lesli*.

*Lesli* is considered by her sisters as the unofficial leader of the band. Her sisters call her a guiding force in decision-making and that they usually agree with her reasoning.

*Las Fénix* is considered an up-and-coming act in the Latino music industry. Just two years ago, the band signed with a major record label in the Latino industry known as *Disa/Universal*.

The family-oriented band promotes itself heavily wherever it performs, conducting radio, TV, and newspaper interviews extensively. The group has performed all over the U.S. including California, New Mexico, and as far away as Illinois,

Georgia, and Florida. The eldest sister *Ana* serves as the band's office manager, fielding phone requests for interviews and booking shows. The six sisters have four brothers.

*Las Fénix* pays homage to both its Tejano and Mexican cultural heritage, by singing its music in English and signing in Spanish. The band also plays a high-energy stage show that allows the audience to dance along to the songs.

"I think that's how we get people to come out and see us," said *Lesli*. "I think about half the people stand there watching and recording things because they've never seen five girls on stage singing and dancing and playing. The other half is singing and dancing right along with us."

"It's fun. It's not a bunch of strangers who came together and said, 'Hey, let's make a band,'" added *Adela*. "It just came naturally to us and on stage, we just really connect. If someone is doing something wrong, we just look at each other. I think being sisters just makes it more special and more unique. Even having our parents there each time—we're really grateful for it."

"We're all bonding and we're all together. It's really a beautiful thing," added *Berna*.

The young musicians in the band also encourage their peers to fall in love with a sport or music or art, as a means of avoiding negative influences and people. The sisters maintain the best part about being on stage and entertaining is hearing the applause of the audience and the kind words they receive following a performance.

"It keeps people out of trouble, I think. The music has really helped us. If we weren't doing this, I don't know where we'd be," admitted *Berna*. "This has really kept us down-to-earth and united. There's a lot of bad things going on in the world right now and this has kept us focused."

"I'm occupied and not doing drugs like other teens," said *Anahi*, who called it a fun outlet. "I'm busy doing music and not other bad stuff like other teens."

Admission to *MidWest LatinoFest* is \$5, but is free for children 11 and under, senior citizens age 65 and older, as well as anyone who shows a military ID.

# MidWest LatinoFest honors Veterans, Latinos on June 8th in downtown Toledo

By Kevin Milliken for La Prensa

June 8, 2013: *MidWest LatinoFest* already is building on the momentum from last year, booking national entertainment and a salute to veterans in addition to all of the local Latino groups and organizations that participated and made last year's festival such a success.

MidWest LatinoFest runs from noon to 11 p.m. on Saturday, June 8, at Promenade Park in downtown Toledo. Admission is \$5, but is free for children 11 and under, senior citizens age 65 and older, as well as anyone who shows a military ID.

The event will open with a special ceremony, which includes a blessing of the festival, a parade of countries celebrating the various Latino ethnic backgrounds, and a presentation of the colors, followed by *Natasha Salazar* singing the national anthem. A special salute to Latino military veterans and soldiers will be part of the festivities. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall will be on display in conjunction with the festival, across the Maumee River at and near International Park. The event also will feature a friendly tug-of-war between Latino police officers and firefighters at adjacent Festival Park.

Local and regional musical acts will entertain the crowd throughout the day. *Triple Threat*, *Los Mariachis Locos of the Glass City*, and *El Corazón de México* folkloric dancers will take the stage during the afternoon. Toledo-based *Grupo Visión*, *Grupo Illusion* from Pontiac, MI, and *Los Carnales* from Saginaw, MI will perform through the day. Several DJs will MC the event along with TV personality *Angi González* of *WNWO TV*.

"It's been a great opportunity to be a part of it and to see things go from one year to the next, just really awesome," said *Adrienne Chasteen*, a *La Prensa* marketing rep and festival co-coordinator.

*Las Fénix* will be the featured evening entertainment, scheduled to take center stage at 9 p.m. Festival organizers believe a national act of their caliber will be a huge draw. "It's not just Tejano—there's a few different, other areas of music that they cover and I think it's going to be great," said Ms. Chasteen. "Just to see everybody coming together is going to be great. I think it's going to be a very cultural event and fun for the whole family."

*Nanette Nieto*, a *La Prensa* marketing rep and festival co-coordinator with Ms. Chasteen and Co-Chairs *Lulu Perales* and *George Plasencio* agree.

As part of an ongoing effort to improve the overall health of local Latino families, *DJ Linda Parra* and her *Nuestra Gente* volunteers will assist healthcare providers with free blood pressure checks, blood sugar screenings to detect diabetes, HIV testing, and other health-related services throughout the day.

"People who go to the festival can get the free screenings now that we've tried to educate the community about Latinos and diabetes," said *Linda Parra*, executive director of *Nuestra Gente Community Projects*. "It's like you went to a party to see the doctor."

The whole process will take festival-goers about 15 minutes to complete. People can walk the festival grounds and then return to learn their test results. *Nuestra Gente* completed 116 free health screenings during a recent event in April.

Food, clothing, art, and jewelry vendors will dot the festival grounds, selling Latino-oriented wares. Some non-profit groups also will set up information booths. "It's

grown about 20 percent over last year," said *María Molina*, vendor coordinator. "People are getting excited. There have been a lot of last-minute calls. It will make everyone happy."

The regional focus of the festival is reaching Latino families across Ohio and Michigan and nearby Indiana. The wider event promotion has attendees expected from Ft. Wayne, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Adrian, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Defiance, Lorain, and Columbus.

"We've had more sponsors from the Columbus area, which is really great," said Ms. Molina. "Those sponsors usually get involved with the Columbus Latino festival, which is beautiful and runs throughout two or three blocks of downtown there. A lot of people in Columbus are noticing the Toledo festival."

The family-friendly event will feature plenty of kids' activities throughout the day, including the *Fire House*, where Toledo firefighters will teach kids about how to escape a burning home safely. *Sheriff John Tharp's* Lucas County Sheriff's Office will provide free fingerprinting, according to *Linda De la Peña* of the Sheriff's Dept.

The Family Children's Activity Area will be open noon to 5 p.m. and will include performances by schoolchildren from the *L. Hollingworth School for the Talented & Gifted*, where many Latino elementary-age children attend.

The *Toledo Zoo* and *Imagination Station* will provide educational and hands-on activities, *Home Depot* will help kids either to build a fire truck or floral storage box, *OLA* will conduct a children's mural painting, and the *Sofía Quintero Art & Cultural Center* will provide activities *para los niños*.

The *Toledo Blade* will be taking photographs for attendees on a first-come, first-serve basis, from 4:00 until 9:00PM. Other active participants with the MidWest LatinoFest committee are: *La Prensa*, *WNWO*, Latino media outlets, the *Spanish American Organization (SAO)*, and other Latino and veteran organizations.

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**Saturday, June 8, 2013**

**Noon to 11:00 pm**

**Promenade Park, Toledo, Ohio**

*Featuring  
Las Fenix*

**Tentative Schedule, June 8, 2013\***

**12:00pm - 12:15pm** Blessing of Festival - Parade of Countries /  
Presentation of Colors  
*Natasha Salazar & National Anthem*

**12:45pm - 1:00pm** *DJ Bob Rios*

**2:00pm** **Dartball Tournament**  
*Triple Threat*

**2:30pm - 3:00pm** *Los Mariachis Locos of the Glass City*

**3:00pm - 3:44pm** *DJ Bob Rios*

**3:45pm - 4:00pm** **MC Angi González of WNWO TV**

**4:00pm - 8:00pm** **Toledo Blade Photo Booth**

**4:00pm - 4:30pm** *El Corazón de México, folkloric dance*

**4:30pm - 5:00pm** *Eddie G (Reggaeton)*

**5:00pm - 6:00pm** **Recognitions and Tributes to Soldiers/Veterans**

**6:00pm - 6:45pm** *Grupo Illusion de Pontiac, MI*

**6:45pm - 6:55pm** *DJ Bob Rios*

**6:55pm - 7:35pm** *Grupo Vizi6n de Toledo, OH*

**7:35pm - 7:45pm** *DJ Bob Rios*

**7:45pm - 8:30pm** *Los Carnales de Saginaw, MI*

**9:00pm - 11:00pm** **Las Fenix de Michoacán, México y Houston, Texas**

*Voter Registration  
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**Family Children's Activity Area from 12:00 - 5:00 PM\***

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- Toledo Zoo-Educational and Hand's on Activity
- Imagination Station - Educational presentation and hand's on activity
- Home Depot- Build A Fire Truck or Floral Children's Storage Box
- OLA- Children's mural painting in children's activity area
- Sofia Quintero Art & Cultural Center in children's activities
- Molina Health Care's Blender Bike for Smoothies, y más

\* Subject to Modification. Questions? Nanette @ 419-944-6430 or 419-242-7744, Adrienne @ 419-870-2797, Rico @ 419-870-6565, Gerald 419-290-9028, or Freddy G @ 419-308-5654.

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