

Hispanic Chamber offers new military discount plan

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Monitor Staff

The El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce began offering a new program called "Abrazos" Aug. 11.

The EPHCC has started a community initiative with more than 900 El Paso businesses. The Abrazos Program is a military discount plan aimed at showing local support for the Fort Bliss military community and its dependents.

Members of EPHCC were motivated to start Abrazos because they wanted businesses to show they cared about the Soldiers, their families and retirees. Cindy Ramos-Davidson, EPHCC's chief executive officer, said her organization also wanted to put together a grassroots program that could be implemented right away.

Ramos-Davidson said EPHCC has always been strong supporters of the Fort Bliss community.

"We wanted to develop something we felt had lifelong sustainability. The businesses today would not be made available without the sacrifices of those young men and women [in uniform], and we felt we really needed to do something to give back," said Ramos-Davidson.

The consensus among the businesses participating in Abrazos is they

want to show their appreciation to the military and they can do this by providing a discount, according to Jonathan Shoman, marketing coordinator for Huntleigh Technology Group.

"The Soldiers are providing an invaluable service to the country and the least we can do is welcome them with open arms to El Paso. Whatever any business can do to cater to the current and incoming Soldiers would be the best thing that could happen," said Shoman. Ramos-Davidson and the EPHCC understand the difficulties some newcomers may face when they first come to El Paso. They also know it may be difficult and intimidating for some people because it is hard to go into a business and get the right service if the employees do not speak English. The EPHCC does not want any newcomers coming in to the community and second guessing their decision to move here.

"I keep telling my crew we have to love these people in and let them know we are happy they are here," said Ramos-Davidson.

The Web site created for Abrazos allows customers to not only find out which businesses participate in the program, but also allows customers the opportunity to translate from



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Cindy Ramos-Davidson, El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce chief executive officer, explains why the Abrazos Program was implemented.

Spanish to English, along with many other translations. The site is also a useful tool to utilize for newcomers who are not familiar with the culture or festivals El Paso has to offer.

According to Ramos-Davidson, the ultimate goal of EPHCC is to have the entire city of El Paso display the

Abrazos logo in their window and have all of their members in the discount program.

"We want anyone who comes in to the community to know our businesses want to ... show them they are very much valued by the service they provide," said Ramos-Davidson.

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