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| **17560 Greger St**  **Sonoma, CA 95476**  **Phone: (707) 938-5131**  **Fax: (707) 996-1287**  **www.laluzcenter.org**  **Board of Directors:**  **Nick Mendelson**  **President**  **Ligia Booker**  **Founder/Emeritus**  **Jose Alvarez**  **Kimberly Blattner**  **Bill Blosser**  **Denise Calvillo**  **Brad Corona**  **Rayne Dessayer**  **Jennifer Gray Thompson**  **Bill Hake**  **Sydnie Kohara**  **Brian Nicholson**  **Beth Stelluto Dunaier**  **Dawn Williams**  **La Luz is a 501(c)3**  **Nonprofit organization**  **Tax ID # 68-0228235**  [**www.laluzcenter.org**](http://www.laluzcenter.org)  **Legacy Giving ...**  **please include**  **La Luz Center in your**  **estate planning** |

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**Leonardo Lobato Named Executive Director of La Luz Center**

Sonoma Valley Latinx Advocacy Organization Welcomes Veteran Education Leader

August 2, 2021 – Sonoma, CA:  **La Luz Center**, dedicated to helping Sonoma Valley’s Latinx community thrive, has selected **Leonardo Lobato** as the organization’s new Executive Director. Lobato assumes his new role later this month.

“We are very excited to have Leonardo as our new leader at La Luz,” says Board President Nick Mendelson. “It was an extensive selection process, with the needs of our community at the heart of our decision-making. We believe he will help build on the success we have as a trusted advocate for our Sonoma Valley Latinx community.”

Lobato has more than 20 years of international business and education experience. He was founder and CEO of the International Center for Reciprocal Training (ICRT), an organization supporting Latinx higher education students with international internships. At IAESTE Mexico (International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience), he facilitated internships for STEM and life sciences students in more than 80 countries. His business experience includes positions at Coors Brewing Company and Johnson and Johnson. Lobato, a native of Mexico, holds master’s degrees from Stanford University and Thunderbird School of Global Management.

Lobato says he’s impressed with the warmth and friendliness of Sonoma Valley and welcomes the opportunity to work on a more grassroots level with La Luz clients and partners developing solutions to community problems.

“I hope to help La Luz fulfill its mission of strengthening the community by placing its families and their needs at the center of the services it provides and taking a holistic approach in responding to those needs. This approach resonates not only with my cultural heritage that places great importance on the family but also with my experience in education.”

Lobato joins La Luz as it transitions through 18 months of pandemic operations. The organization has become a leader in early childhood education efforts in Sonoma Valley. Its microloan program has supported 30 Sonoma Valley businesses, helping to create and sustain about 150 jobs. Lobato hopes to strengthen those ties by responding quickly to the challenges and opportunities of a changing environment.

“From my experience in education and business, I believe that a strong bond with our community, embracing our cultural heritage, and our bilingual competencies are invaluable assets for Latinxs in all endeavors,” he says.

Lobato will work with a slate of newly-elected officers on the La Luz board. In addition to President Nick Mendelson of Morgan Stanley, Redwood Credit Union’s Jose Alvarez serves as Vice President. Dawn Williams, founder of Gate Financial Services, continues in her role as Treasurer, and Rayne Dessayer, a former business owner in the hospitality industry, has been reelected Secretary.

*About La Luz Center |*[*www.laluzcenter.org*](http://www.laluzcenter.org)

*Serving the Sonoma Valley for more than 36 years, La Luz Center is committed to strengthening community through family services, economic advancement, and community engagement. It has long been a trusted source of aid and assistance in Sonoma Valley, helping the community through numerous natural and economic disasters. La Luz offers successful programs in early childhood education, direct financial assistance through microloans, and an endowment program to financially safeguard the organization as it prepares to weather any future crises. Currently, La Luz continues local efforts in the Springs community to help vaccinate residents against COVID-19 and educate businesses in pandemic protocols. La Luz Center is a 501(c)3 organization.*