

ESL nonprofit group expands in Longmont

By Melanie M. Sidwell

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LONGMONT — Intercambio de Comunidades, a nonprofit that provides affordable English language classes, life skills training and intercultural events, has opened a Longmont office.

The nonprofit also is expanding its scholarship program, thanks to a \$3,000 grant from U of C Federal Credit Union, which has opened a Longmont office at 1079 S. Hover St.

The grand opening for the credit union was held Wednesday.

Both Intercambio de Comunidades and the U of C Federal Credit Union are expanding their services in Longmont.

Credit union spokesman Rich Jones said the cooperative bank was proud to align itself with Intercambio and its mission to reduce cultural barriers through understanding and education.

"It's such a great fit for us," Jones said. "We believe in creating inclusionary communities where everybody ... gets the services they need to be successful. It so closely parallels what we do here at the credit union."

Earlier this year, Boulder County AIDS Project bought an office suite at 82 21st Ave. in the Powell Building, where Intercambio now has office space, said spokeswoman Cathy Lurie.

She added that Intercambio also has created a program coordinator position, filled by Brett Kassels, for its

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Cathy Lurie

Longmont services.

The nonprofit provides one-on-one in-home English classes for its students, a majority of whom are native Spanish speakers, Lurie said.

Intercambio, though, is open to all immigrants, she said.

Kassels said he wants to recruit more volunteers and match those volunteers with the more than 80 students who are on a waiting list.

The nonprofit also holds group classes at the Longmont Public Library, which the \$3,000 grant for low-income student scholarships will help to fund, Lurie said.

"We really hope to build a more integrated community," she said. "The one-on-one dialogues is what really reduces the cultural barriers when two groups don't understand each other. That's the foundation of our program: to build bridges across those cultures."

To contact the new Longmont office, call 303-996-0275, Ext. 6, or e-mail cathy@intercambioweb.org. Or visit www.intercambioweb.org.

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