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HEADLINE: Mexican Consulate in Rockford to hand out identification cards

BYLINE: Carrie Watters, Staff

BODY:

Rockford Register Star

The mobile Mexican Consulate is back in Rockford this weekend, helping Mexican citizens living here acquire the Mexican government-issued Matricula Consular Card.

The card is photo proof of who the bearer is, making it easier to travel back to Mexico to visit friends and family. It also makes it possible to obtain an identification number needed to pay taxes and makes it possible to open bank accounts and establish credit.

On Friday, the consulate issued about 250 cards. They cost \$26. The consulate will be at St. Edward School, 3020 11th St., Rockford, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. today. About 500 cards can be issued each day.

Hispanics are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the Rock River Valley, according to the 2000 census. Of the 27,491 Hispanics living in Boone, Ogle and Winnebago counties, more than 80 percent (22,209) are of Mexican descent.

(Full Story) Mexican ID cards broaden opportunities; By CARRIE WATTERS; Rockford Register Star; ROCKFORD - They started lining up at 3:30 a.m. Friday. Marco Guzman was there because the \$26 he spent will make it easier to travel back to Mexico to visit his parents and brothers. Others, many of them undocumented, were there because they don't have Social Security cards or driver's licenses. For them, the Mexican government-issued Matricula Consular Card is photo proof of who they are.

The card makes it possible to obtain an identification number needed to pay taxes, makes it possible to open bank accounts and establish credit, and, in Guzman's case, will ease the way when traveling back to Mexico because it proves Mexican citizenship. "Too many Mexicans don't have anything to say, 'I am somebody,'" Guzman said as he waited to get his card. On Friday, the mobile Mexican Consulate issued about 250 of the cards. The consulate is at the same site today. As many as 500 cards can be issued in a day. For years, the consulate has traveled to cities with significant Hispanic populations to issue

the ID cards. Otherwise, people would have to travel to downtown Chicago. Hispanics are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the Rock River Valley, according to the 2000 census. The numbers show 27,491 of the 371,236 residents in Boone, Ogle and Winnebago counties are Hispanic. That's a 145 percent increase from 1990. More than 80 percent (22,209) of local Hispanics are of Mexican descent. This is the third time since 2002 that the consulate has visited Rockford; on both occasions, 500 cards were issued each day. Most standing in line Friday declined to talk with the Rockford Register Star. Some are uncomfortable with English, some are nervous because they're undocumented. "It's a matter of trust," said Tanechka Rivera of La Voz Latina, a Rockford Hispanic advocacy group. Rivera praised Rep. Chuck Jefferson, D-Rockford, hosting the consulate. As the Hispanic population increases in economic power, more and more banks are willing to accept the ID cards to open accounts. Hispanic spending power is expected to reach \$926 billion by 2007, according to Saul Bosca, product manager at Fifth Third Bank.

Undocumented Mexican immigrants fall victim to predatory lenders because mainstream banks won't do business with them, Rivera said. "Their dream is to have a decent house for their kids," Rivera said. "They want to contribute to their community." The card makes that easier, including paying taxes. Many undocumented immigrants pay taxes because it shows moral behavior that later can help them gain legal status, Rivera said. Guzman has his immigration documents in order. He's a U.S. resident who left his home in central Mexico seven years ago for a better life in Rockford. He came with his wife and daughter and found factory work. "You've got the better kind of life here and can make a little more money. A better life for my kids is what I'm looking for," Guzman said. He admits that it's a difficult transition, with different laws and language. Guzman left San Luis Potosi with no English background. He speaks fluent English today. Guzman was pleased with getting the card on Friday. He hasn't been home in seven years. He has two sons to introduce to their grandparents.

How to get an ID card; * What: The mobile Mexican Consulate will issue Matricula Consular Cards, good for five years, and passports to Mexican immigrants. * Where: St. Edward School, 3020 11th St., Rockford; * When: 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. today; * Cost: \$26 for the Matricula Consular Card; * What to bring: Documents in three categories: proof of address from a telephone bill, electric bill or similar document; proof of identity, such as a birth certificate; and proof of nationality, with a birth certificate or other document. * For more information: Call 815-979-9415

Como conseguir la tarjeta de identificacion; * Que: El Consulado mexicano movil publicara tarjetas consulares de Matricula, que seran buenas por cinco anos, y pasaportes a inmigrantes mexicanos; * Donde: Escuela Del St. Edward, 3020 11mo St., Rockford; * Cuando: Hoy, desde las 8 de la manana hasta las 2 de la tarde; * Coste: \$26 * Traigan: Documentos en tres categorias: La prueba de la direccion de un documento como una cuenta de telefono o cuenta electrica, una prueba de la identidad de un documento como una partida de nacimiento y una prueba de la nacionalidad con un documento como una partida de nacimiento; * Para mas informacion: Llame 815-979-9415