



*Billy Cabrera*

Throughout HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH, CTI will feature profiles of local Hispanic leaders to celebrate [#LowellHispanicExcellence](#) by learning about their experiences, perspectives, and the wisdom they share in our local communities.

**Hispanic Heritage Month 9/15-10/15  
An Interview with BILLY CABRERA**

Proud owner of Billy's Barbershop and the founder of the Resource & Reclamation Center Nominated by **Barbara Warren**, Division Director Housing and Homeless Services at CTI

*"I first heard about Billy's Barbershop from folks who live in the Lowell community, and always wondered how a Barbershop could be so much more than a Barbershop. When people would talk about it you could hear the passion and respect that they had for the work that Billy was doing at his shop. Thank you, Billy for all that you do in our community." ~ Barbara Warren*

**What is your title/organization and/or involvement in the community, and what accomplishment are you most proud of?**

I am the proud owner of Billy's Barbershop and the founder of the Resource & Reclamation Center. When I opened my business, I wanted to do something more than just cut hair; I wanted to share with others that might have had a hard time finding themselves in grips of addiction and incarceration that all things are possible - that there is a way out. With that mindset I started reaching out to different organizations to share my vision, and help translate the concept of addiction to the misinformed. I was able to share and help others understand, that all those that fight addiction shall not die without knowing that change is possible.

Billy's Barbershop then established partnerships with different organizations in the community that shared the same interest. I am so proud that I was able to create a safe

space for those looking for a way out. A space where anyone, no matter who they are or where they are from, will never feel judged or turned away. A space where you can feel the love and acceptance upon entering.

**What does Hispanic Heritage Month mean to you?**

For a long time, I felt different, as if I didn't belong due to my past experiences. I was misinformed. Today, with much gathered information, I am proud to be Latino. Hispanic Heritage Month is a truly special occasion to gather and celebrate the diverse cultures that shape the Hispanic community; to celebrate the many achievements within the Latin community. Today, I love sharing my culture with my community – one haircut at a time.

**What was one of the most difficult obstacles you have had to overcome?**

One of the biggest obstacles I had to face was learning to be a nurturing Dad to my daughters. Not having my mother or father in my life as a child growing up made it difficult for me to be vulnerable – as a child into adulthood. The moment I had my daughters, it became apparent to me that I was the one responsible to care for them and provide for them - no one else. I had to let go of everything I knew and ask for help. Because of that, I learned what it meant to be a Dad: loving, caring and nurturing. I became the person I not only wanted, but needed in my life growing up. Someone that would love me. Someone to listen to me. Someone that would hold me. Someone that would take me to a game. Someone that I could call Dad. Today I became that person. I am Dad. My biggest obstacle.

**In your leadership role, how do you actively promote inclusivity and equity?**

I am a firm believer that all people should feel welcome and accepted. I've been practicing that mentality in my shop since day one, and I have people from all walks of life that come into my business because they feel welcome to be who they are. Men, women, transgender, all different races, ethnic background, everybody.

When I started doing work with the community on healthy masculinity, it opened my eyes to a lot, and it allowed me to look at areas that maybe made me feel uncomfortable and I took a look at that. My whole team here has done that work too. So, if you came into my shop, you would feel welcome - no one on my team tolerates judgement of others, and the atmosphere doesn't promote that. You'll walk in and see all different kinds of people. It was important to me since the day I opened for all to feel welcome.

**What legacy do you hope to leave behind?**

I am hoping that each and everyday I can have an impact with everyone I meet. I try to do that by exercising love and kindness to everyone, and hope to trigger a smile while in my presence. I hope to leave behind a simple Legacy – a remembrance of acceptance and true kindness.

**Looking back on your leadership journey, what would you tell your younger self about embracing your identity and stepping into a leadership role with confidence?**

I never wanted to be a leader, but throughout my life I filled that role without intending to or trying to. It just would happen. Unfortunately, my leadership style didn't always promote kindness and acceptance. I would tell my younger self that being a leader is a responsibility. I may not have recognized it as a responsibility when I was younger. If you are going to step up and lead, you need to lead people in the right direction. So, I would probably tell my younger self to lead with purpose, to lead with a goal of making a positive difference.

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