Watching the Roots Take Hold
Yankees expand their outreach efforts among the Hispanic community

Try as they might, it would be impossible for the Yankees to personally connect with every fan the world over. But fostering meaningful, deep-seated connections to the Hispanic community has long been the mission guiding the Yankees’ Latino affairs department, which in July expanded its outreach efforts.

“People are fans of the Yankees in general, but what makes the superfan is when a team forms a personal connection with them,” said Manuel García, the department’s executive director. “I think grassroots efforts are an integral part of our overall outreach. It is especially important with the Hispanic community because it really creates that connection, and once you create that connection, the relationship grows.”

Last month, García and his staff expanded their grassroots efforts by reaching out to a new community when, for the first time, the Yankees took part in Long Island’s annual Colombian Independence Festival on July 12.

“We’re always looking to connect with different groups, and, obviously, Colombians are a big part of New York,” García said.

To celebrate the anniversary of Colombia’s independence, the Yankees donated 300 issues of Yankees Magazine En Español — 250 of which were given away at the Colombian Independence Day Gala on July 9 and the remainder raffled off at the festival — and took out a full-page ad in the gala program.

“We couldn’t be more grateful for the support received from the New York Yankees,” said Jairo Zuluaga, one of the festival’s organizers. “I believe that when efforts are joined to create cultural integration among the Latin communities through sports, fun and cultural events, we help to promote a deeper understanding and respect for cultural differences, we empower the community to preserve their Latino heritage, and we help to bring more families together.”

But outreach involves more than developing new ties; the Yankees also must work to nurture existing relationships.

One such example is the Bronx Dominican Day Parade scholarship program, which assists Dominican students seeking to complete their education. Since 2008, the Yankees have supported the initiative, and during a pregame ceremony at Yankee Stadium on July 21, the team once again recognized 10 students from local Bronx colleges. Each of the students honored received a $1,000 scholarship, complimentary tickets to the game and a free tour of the Stadium the next day. Additionally, the honorees marched in the 26th annual Bronx Dominican Day Parade on July 26.

For many of the scholarship recipients, the Yankees’ generosity is life-changing because it often allows them to pursue opportunities they would otherwise have been forced to forgo.

“Finishing my education is definitely a personal goal,” said Emily Maldonado, who was on pace to graduate from Lehman College this year. “I would be the first person in my immediate family to graduate college. I actually had to transfer from two other colleges because I couldn’t afford it. So knowing that this is the finish line, and this scholarship helps me get there, I’m just really thankful for it.

“It’s nice that the Yankees give back to the Latino community. It really is a connection, and you can see that they care about us.”

Follow the Yankees en español at yankeesbeisbol.com, at www.facebook.com/yankeesbeisbol and on Twitter at @Yankees_Beisbol.