Serving as a Bridge

Since 2007, the Yankees’ Latino affairs department has brought the Hispanic community and the team together

By Sara Ladino Cano

On Sept. 9, the Yankees recognized a new community partner, Desfile de la Hispanidad, in its 50th anniversary. For a half-century, Desfile de la Hispanidad — the Hispanic Day Parade — has brought together 20 Latin American countries and Spain for the New York celebration along Fifth Avenue.

In her first on-field pregame ceremony at Yankee Stadium, Myrna Guerra, president of Desfile de la Hispanidad, was joined by pitcher Ivan Nova and celebrated along with four other parade organizers for their efforts in uniting the Hispanic community while sharing its culture with the city.

Walking on the famous field, where prominent players and personalities have walked before, gave the group and other members of the Hispanic community that have participated in similar ceremonies in the past an air of distinction and confidence.

“Hispanics outside or fans can see that the organization supports the social and cultural work of these organizations,” Guerra said of the Yankees.

With a large Hispanic fan base, the Yankees established a department in 2007 to provide services to, form a connection with and acquire a better understanding of the Hispanic community. Since then, the Latino affairs department has been committed to engaging the Hispanic population.

“[Latino affairs is] a voice, a connection of the Yankees to the market and of the market to the Yankees,” said Manuel García, the executive director of the department. “Because that’s the only way you can create a meaningful relationship and connection with the market and the community and your fans.”

Also contributing to the need for the department is the makeup of the team’s home base in the South Bronx and of Major League Baseball as a whole. In the immediate area surrounding the Stadium, an estimated 71.6 percent of the population is of Spanish/Hispanic origin, according to research from the data analysis company Nielsen Scarborough, while Latin American players made up more than 20 percent of the league’s 2015 Opening Day rosters and inactive lists, according to MLB.

Among the department’s objectives is strengthening the Yankees’ ties with the Hispanic fan base online and through social media. Latino affairs works with MLB Advanced Media to maintain yankeesbeisbol.com, as