

A Sit Down with Javier Becerra, Assistant General Counsel at Primerica, and Co-President of Echelon Atlanta



Tell me a little bit about your background.

Most people do not know this about me, but I am a Cuban refugee. My family and I, along with over 20 other individuals, fled Cuba in 1995 on a boat that my dad built. We were out at sea for about 10 hours before we were rescued by the US Coast Guard and Navy. After that, we were taken to Guantanamo Bay where we lived in a refugee camp for about 7 months before we were granted asylum. I grew up in Grayson, GA, for most of my life and attended Grayson High School. I attended Georgia College and State University for undergrad where I got my BS in Biology. I then went on to pursue my JD at Indiana University Maurer School of Law in Bloomington, Indiana.

You are president of the Georgia Hispanic Bar Association. Please tell me a little about your organization.

I have been President of the Georgia Hispanic Bar Association (“GHBA”) for almost two years, and I have loved every second of it. GHBA was created to promote diversity in public and private legal organizations and departments; to educate lawyers by facilitating continuing education opportunities for our members and to educate the Hispanic community on its legal rights and duties; to create a community that fosters the exchange of ideas and information between its members; and to promote the recruitment and retention of Georgia Hispanic students in law school. We are a community of lawyers who empower and support each other in order to be the best attorneys that we can possibly be.

You were recently elected co-president of Echelon. How did you get involved with The Salvation Army in general and Echelon in particular?

I became involved with Echelon because I was recommended to the board by Lynette Smith (EVP and General Counsel of Chick-fil-A). I met Lynette during my time as a Legal Intern at Chick-fil-A. Lynette is a current MAC Advisory Board Member and thought that I would enjoy joining Echelon. Christina Bortz, the President of Echelon at the time, contacted me and she discussed Echelon and the responsibilities of being a board member. I loved everything Christina told me and I had to join the group.

What do you hope to accomplish for Echelon and The Salvation Army of Metro Atlanta?

My current term is for two years. What I hope to accomplish during my tenure is to help the Atlanta Echelon chapter become one of the most active Echelon chapters in the nation. Also, some of my biggest goals are to increase membership and continuing to give back to others and the community. I believe that we can accomplish all these things by hosting great events that provide both personal and professional growth to our members.

You represent two key demographics: young adults and the Latinx community. How can legacy organizations like The Salvation Army adapt in order to reach and perhaps better appeal to these groups?

I think that for legacy organizations like The Salvation Army to reach the Latinx community they must become invested in helping that community. They must make an active effort to start outreach in the Latinx community. This outreach can be done in many different ways such as partnering with local organizations that are already doing outreach in these communities or volunteering in these communities.

Regarding young adults, I believe having groups like Echelon will bridge that gap. It is important that young adults have the opportunity to network with other young adults and also that they find a mentor within these organizations that they can look up to and connect with. The more invested people are in the organization, the stronger they will advocate for legacy organizations and help spread the mission and goals of the organization.

The Georgia Hispanic Bar Association is hosting an online food drive to benefit The Salvation Army's Peachcrest location in Decatur. How did this decision come about?

This event came to fruition during one of our officers' meetings. We acknowledged how it has been difficult to engage members when we cannot host in-person events, so we decided that we should focus on giving back to others during these times. We came up with the idea of hosting a food drive and I was tasked with finding a food pantry to partner with. Due to my involvement with Echelon, I thought that the Salvation Army would be a great partner for this drive. Through my volunteering at the Red Shield, I knew how much food the Salvation Army pantry gave to families in need. I contacted Donna Roper to see if she could help me with setting the food drive up, and Donna was a huge help like always. She informed me that the Peachcrest location was in dire need of food, as they were already running low on their yearly supply. I just knew then that we needed to help.

In addition to food insecurity, what other areas would you like to see Echelon get more involved in?

One of our future volunteer projects will be to virtually tutor kids at The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Atlanta. Also, we will be continuing to volunteer once a month at Red

Shield. We are always looking for people to volunteer for these events, so please reach out if you are interested in volunteering!

To learn more about Echelon Atlanta, visit <https://atlanta.salvationarmyechelon.org/>.

To purchase items for the Georgia Hispanic Bar Association's food drive benefitting The Salvation Army of Metro Atlanta's Peachcrest Corps, visit https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/14L2R8WP0FVAK?ref_=wl_share.

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