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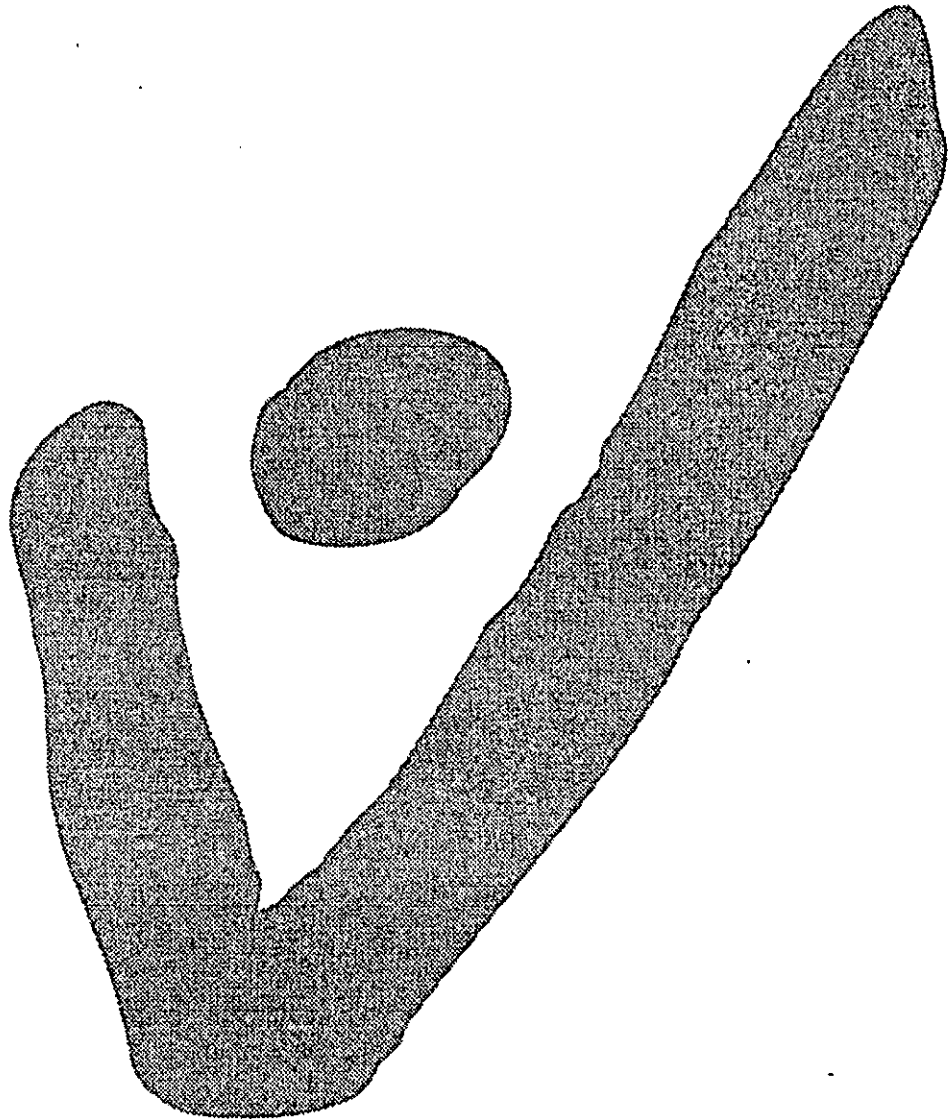
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**International Meeting of Good News  
The Education for the Democracy in America**

November 1995 • Caracas, Venezuela



**Venezuela's School of Neighbors**  
15 Years of Education for the Democracy

# Venezuela's School of Neighbors

The School is a nonprofit civil association which was founded in 1980. It is a services center for citizens, community organizations and institutions. It offers training, help, advice, information and counsel to community representatives, municipal government officers and journalists all over the country.

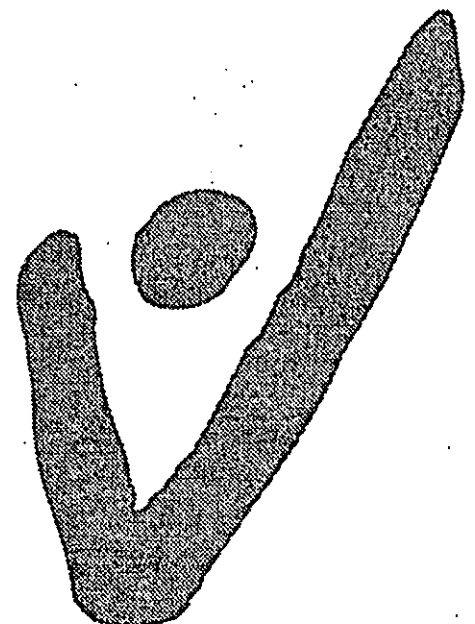
The School is specialized in Neighbors, Community and Municipium. It offers courses and prepares events to form promoters of the community organization and Neighborhoods Directors (there are approximately 14.500 Associations in Venezuela), for mayors, councilors and Parochial Boards and for journalists and leaders of opinion. It is also specialized in the promotion of the organization of the communities in order to resolve specific problems with an adequate relationship with the local government, regional or national, without any parties dependence and highlighting the necessary individual responsibility of every citizen.

It has a space in the radio and a television show reporting on grassroots successes and positive community experiences. It also has an Information Branch that gathers the local solutions given to the national problems in order to present them to the Media (radio, television) all over the country. It also prepares journalist's meetings to balance the contents of the media presenting all the positive experiences of the country and its citizens. All this is done under the suggestive and challenging name of **GOOD NEWS**.

It promotes the meeting between companies and communities, as well as neighbors, and the coordination of community organizations in networks, in one network of networks. Also conducts one to the reflection to promote legislative reforms and to modernize the norms of the political system.

It keeps its projects and services, fifteen years ago, with the help of agreements and national and foreign donations. Its associates never support parties candidates to positions of popular representation. It combines the volunteers efforts with the daily work of leaders and expert professionals in communication, education and organization.

The slogan of the Venezuela's School for Neighbors has been, during these 15 years, "EDUCATION FOR THE DEMOCRACY".



# Civil Society, Community Organizations and NGO's

The Venezuelan society is presently in a complete process of modernization, facing serious economical and social problems a crisis of credibility and legitimacy of the political institutions and certain deterioration of its options in the frame of the democracy.

It looks like that it is now the time for the citizens to start preparing themselves to live and directly take steps within the democratic system. All this because the most recent changes in its political system, the most concrete solutions to the local matters and the evolution of the public opinion are mainly based on the existence and projection of civil associations which have been developing all over the country.

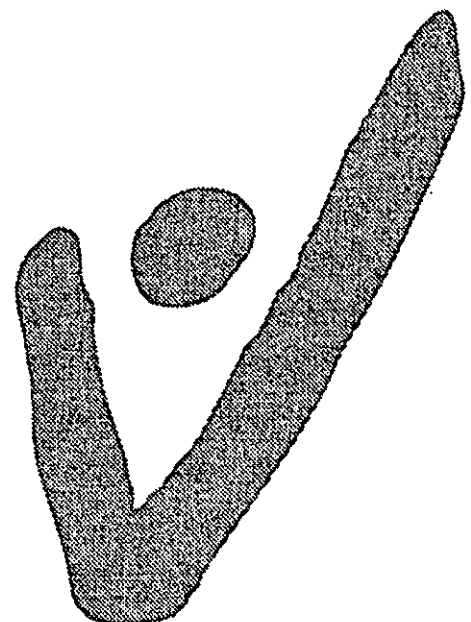
Under the generic concept of **civil society** it has been constituted an there exist community organizations, devoting their time to local problems in their origin, and non-governmental organizations, in the sense of institutions owned by the citizens motivated by a matter determining their action.

For the venezuelan public opinion, its is clear that in the civil society there exist the local solutions to the national problems and regional leaderships able to represent the citizens and their interests.

## The Civil Society in America

Very likely the venezuelan case is similar to the ones of the rest of the continent: the civil society, the community groups and the citizens and the non-governmental organizations are playing an useful role in the societies. Based on the present modernization, the citizens are taking the necessary steps through the organizations that go beyond the parties and unions.

That is why it is indeed attractive and challenging to hold a meeting with the promoters experiences belonging to that civil society of each country, which for sure are facing common problems and have discovered real keys and learnings very useful to others from similar societies.



## Fifteen Years Educating for the Democracy

Venezuela's School for Neighbors is, in 1995, arriving to its fifteen years acting as a services center, and educating for the democracy. There are fifteen years of training, information a counseling that have had an evident impact in the venezuelan society.

To commemorate this anniversary, it is planned to carry out a number of local, regional and national initiatives. It is important to mention the emphasis given to **THE COMMUNITY DAY** as a decentralized national event accomplished by volunteers, and also the presentation of a book containing the School's experience.

Venezuela and The School itself are of course included in the continental integration process and in the world global process.

That's why it is considered pertinent that the central event of the celebration be an opportunity of linkage and growing as of similar initiatives of education for the democracy of all the continent. And if it is possible, of countries of other continents.

## National Education Meeting for the Democracy

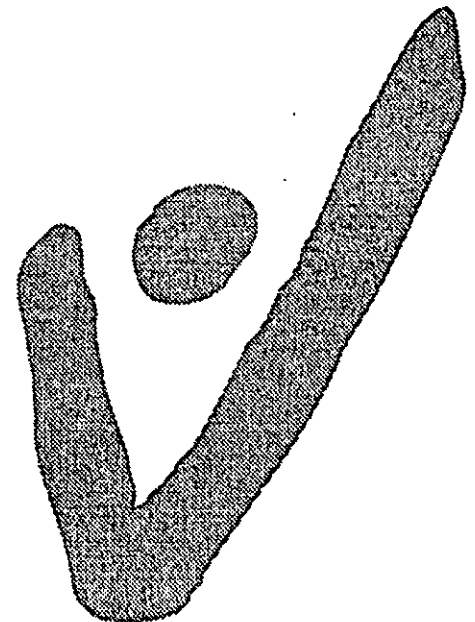
It appeared the idea to first carry out a meeting of positive experiences, that is of Good News, concerning citizens education for the participation at the **venezuelan society level**, with the intention of creating an exchange network, and institutions directory and a video-media record of experiences.

The first step for this meeting and the subsequent relations is the initiative of a public electronic conference called **Vecind@rio**, which is published in the network Fidonet of the Venezuela's BBS.

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# International Education Meeting for the Democracy

Subsequently and as a central event of the anniversary we are planning to carry out a meeting at international level with the intention of gathering the most significant and plural experiences of education for the democracy in América as a continent.

And also with the idea of having a **public version** impacting the society itself being accomplished as a **private workshop** with a restricted access of the venezuelan network with foreing quests. And having as a result a videotape and a book, a directory and the possibility of conforming a network, distributed as a bulletin **via fax**, of a public conference in the continental cyberspace and the possibility of a new meeting or partial events by themes or regions of the continent.

The International Meeting will be carried out during the month of **November**, after a previous work of exchange and reflection about the experiences and the agenda.

## Meaning of the Proposal

As it can be seen, more than some events themselves, we are proposing the creation of a network based on the meetings at Venezuela's level as well as the continent's level. This could have outstanding repercussion during the next years, as it significantly strengthens the efforts in each country giving them a continental dimension.

The prior affirmation includes the spreading of many positive community experiences. Also means the improvement of the promoter's action, of the trainers of the citizen's participation and a better education for the democracy. Just for the democracy that America needs.

