



**2018 Minnesota-Dakotas  
Kiwanis District  
Convention  
Willmar, MN**

**Keynote Address  
10:00 a.m., Saturday, August 11**

**“From migrant worker to college professor: Sociology instructor Vargas relates to students with humor, stories”.**

This was the heading of an article in the local newspaper that describes Joel Javier “Jay” Vargas, a sociology instructor at Minnesota West Community and Technical College in Worthington Minnesota where his teaching is Diversity/Community Policing/Victimization, Introduction to Sociology, Race/Ethnic Relations, Social Problems, Drugs in Society, Family Violence, and Marriage and the Family.

Because of his passion for teaching sociology, he was named the Minnesota West Community & Technology College campus Teacher of the Year for 2013-14. Despite having earlier worked in child protection, Jay came to realize that teaching would make a bigger impact and where students enjoy learning from his style of humor, stories and personal connection.

Mr. Vargas is a native of Weslaco, Texas, a town about eight miles north of the U.S./Mexican border. His professional affiliations are Alpha Kappa Delta, American Sociological Association, Gamma Sigma Delta and Golden Key International Honour Society.

Today, he has a collection of hard-fought degrees that would be impressive by any measure: a B.A. in sociology and an M.S. in sociology, both from the University of Texas-Pan American; an M.S. in ethnic and multicultural studies and a graduate certificate in cultural diversity, both from Minnesota State University-Mankato; a Ph.D. in rural sociology from South Dakota State University in 2010; and, most recently, a graduate certificate in child advocacy studies from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in 2015. Those credentials are all the more extraordinary when we learn that Mr. Vargas is the son of former migrant workers, and notes that “we all have stories, and everyone’s story is important”, therefore he will be speaking about his life and working with young people in today’s society.