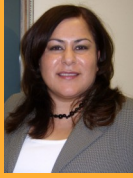


NEWS AND
VIEWS FROM
THE E.D.



By **Laura
Ponce**

New Year, New Challenges

The New Year is a great time to take inventory of the past and look to the challenges that lay ahead. This year Project BRAVO has many obstacles to overcome, the biggest one being the significant reductions in our funding from the state. Community Action Agencies across the state of Texas will be affected by the decline in funding and so Project BRAVO is not the only agency faced with difficult choices in 2011. Changes at Project BRAVO are inevitable due to the constrictions of our budget, but administration staff is carefully deliberating strategies to ensure our organization will overcome this difficult period. Every decision being made will have the needs of our clients at its core and ultimately the end result will be what is best for our community. Let's look forward to a new year full of opportunity to better serve our clients and sustainable change for the better.



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- BRAVO Awards
- New Board Members
- 2011 Resolutions



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The BRAVO Newsletter

2011

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New Year Brings New Challenges For CAP Agencies

The year just concluded can best be described as a transition year for El Paso's Community Action Program, Project BRAVO, Inc. The agency enjoyed many successes in 2010 amid a climate of change and, in some cases, redirection. Just about every Project BRAVO department can boast of numerous highlights during the past year. Among the departments that achieved impressive successes during the year were the Weatherization Department, Housing, Adult Basic Education, Patient Assistance, En-

ergy Assistance and Employment Services. Equipped with a new management team and a new resolve to move forward in helping low-income, elderly and disabled residents of El Paso County, members of the Project BRAVO staff are ready to take on the challenges of a new year. Throughout Texas and the U.S., community action agencies including Project BRAVO will likely be navigating through some rough waters in 2011.

(continued next page)

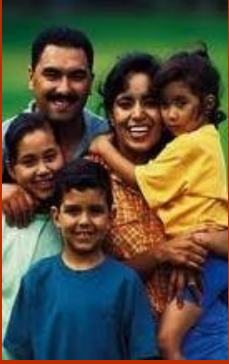
Nick Lara Retires from Project BRAVO After 23 Years

In 1987, Project BRAVO was an agency on the move. Nick Lara was primed and ready to offer his expertise in finance and home mortgages to an agency that had begun to expand into housing services for low-income residents. The prospect of home ownership was more than a dream for thousands of South El Paso residents. It was a way of ensuring a happy and productive life for their children. For Nick Lara, the task of assisting residents with their home mortgage applications was a matter of the heart. After a stint at the now-defunct SER, Lara quickly began working on Project BRAVO's bid to become a HUD-certified agency.



(continued next page)

(New Challenges from page 1)



*“In a country well governed poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed wealth is something to be ashamed of”
-Confucius*

According to the Washington D.C.-based National Community Action Foundation, the new Congress will be focusing on reducing a number of social service and energy programs to help deal with growing budget deficits and a slowly-expanding national economy. In Texas, the state legislature will similarly be wrestling a huge budget shortfall estimated to be anywhere from \$11 billion to \$20 million. Although the targets of budget reductions have yet to be identified, community action programs across the state are expressing confidence the impact at the local level will be manageable over the long term. Nonetheless, El Paso’s Project BRAVO remains one of the state’s leading social service agencies performing a wide range of services benefitting low-income, elderly and disabled residents. High-profile programs such as Weatherization will continue to help residents reduce their energy use while saving hundreds of dollars on their utility bills.



(Lara from page 1)

Working closely with South El Paso neighborhood activists including Carmen Felix and others, Lara provided professional help and guidance to countless of residents seeking to establish their home ownership credentials. A monumental issue that stood as an obstacle to home ownership in 1987 was a lack of access to capital for low-income residents. Banks and other lending institutions were simply not interested in making home mortgage loans to a segment of the population. Undeterred, Lara worked tirelessly with Project BRAVO’s leadership to attain full HUD certification. The hard work paid off. Eventually, HUD came through with its promise to assist South El Paso residents through education and support. The agency immediately began offering housing counseling services to low-income residents. Lara had successfully completed his education while working at the agency and recognized that residents needed to be fully informed about the intricate and often complicated process of applying for home mortgage loans. In addition to his work as a housing counselor, Lara assisted in creating the housing programs that over the years have helped thousands of residents. He also was instrumental in working with the City of El Paso to build and manage the housing complexes now owned and operated by Project BRAVO. Mr. Lara’s contributions to the betterment of the citizens of El Paso are highly commendable. Members of the staff and management paid tribute to Mr. Lara during a farewell gathering at the main office on December 17. Asked what he planned to do during retirement, he jokingly indicated he may return to his very first career - as a pawn broker.



Project BRAVO
Helping People
Changing Lives



BRAVO Awards Highlight Employee Dedication



Diana Herrera is Project BRAVO’s Human Resources Assistant. Her friendly, easy-going personality combined with her hard work and efficiency has earned her one of this month’s BRAVO awards.

Viridiana Ortiz is Project BRAVO’s Courier Clerk who brings a smile to everyone. Her strong work ethic and friendly disposition have made her a great person to work with. BRAVO, Viri!

Elsa Dominguez, who works in the Project BRAVO Ysleta office, is a model of efficiency and friendly service. Her clients agree she is most deserving of a BRAVO Award!

Maribel Santoyo is Project BRAVO’s Community Relations Assistant who earns her BRAVO Award for her enthusiasm and her desire to excel at every task. Her positive contributions are worthy of accolades!

Claudia Arreola is one of Project BRAVO’s roving caseworkers whose bright personality and client appeal make her highly deserving of this month’s BRAVO Awards!

Community Elects Five New Project BRAVO

Board Members



Project BRAVO’s governing board will begin the new year with at least five new board members representing low-income residents of El Paso County. Residents in each of the county’s five geographic areas chose their individual representatives who will join ten other board members on the Board of Directors. The five new board members are:

- **Mago Arellano**, Upper Valley
- **Arturo Moreno Jr.**, South Side

- **Maria Pilar Tovar**, East Side
- **Nina Serna**, Lower Valley
- **Felix Valenzuela**, Northeast

All of the new board members were democratically elected during special elections that took place in December. The new board members will serve a critical role in ensuring low-income residents have a clear voice regarding important policy matters that affect thousands of El Paso County residents. Welcome to Project BRAVO!

Que ondas?

New Year’s Resolutions for 2011

- **Roy Ortega:** I resolve to eat healthier. No more fajitas and Lone Star beer.
- **Pete Huerta:** I resolve to go to Church more often and get involved with my parish. Also, become more efficient at work.
- **Tameka Sargent:** I resolve to get healthier and find more joy.
- **Jessie Vasquez:** I resolve to lose weight and start eating the right food.

- **Tania Rice:** I resolve to hike the Grand Canyon all the way down to the Colorado river and back out the next day.
- **Jose Miguel Israel:** I resolve to exercise more and also work on getting my Masters degree.

