

The Wrong Way to Prune A Tree

By Roy Ortega

Cutting a tree limb while sitting on the wrong side of the branch will most assuredly guarantee an unfavorable result. It is always best to use a thoughtful, reasoned approach when either pruning a tree or trimming the national budget deficit. Right now, the U.S. Congress is



in the process of eliminating almost all of the funding for the Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) program, a move that will have a direct and immediate impact on hundreds of Community Action Agencies all across the country who continue to fight the War on Poverty. These cuts come at a highly inopportune time in America where more than 43.6 million low-income residents including 15.5 million children are fighting to survive in a difficult economy. Nearly 10-percent of persons over age 65 live in poverty in the U.S. In El Paso County, more than a quarter of the population exists below the federal poverty level of \$22,000 a year for a family of four. Surely, the cutting of CSBG funding will eventually have an impact on efforts to end poverty in the U.S. So far in 2011, Project BRAVO has received only 42.6-percent of its CSBG funding. Although the smaller funding levels have led to staff reductions, the agency is working hard to sustain its level of service to the community. According to national reports, President Obama's cut of \$2.5 billion from programs such as the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) will deny assistance to more than 3 million households across the country. National columnist Katrina Vanden Heuvel calls the proposed cuts "maddening" because legislators aren't even considering other more fair and reasonable deficit-reduction alternatives such as closing tax loopholes (next page)



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The BRAVO Newsletter

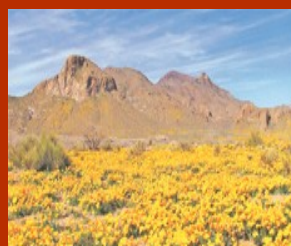
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Staffers Awarded BRAVOs for Dedicated Work

Helping clients overcome difficult circumstances isn't always easy. But having a helpful, caring attitude goes a long way in making sure Project BRAVO lives up to its creed of *helping people, changing lives*. BRAVO Awards are presented each month to members of the Project BRAVO staff who display a genuine desire to help people in our community who seek out our services. Project BRAVO staffers are noted for helping each other provide a more meaningful experience for clients. Among the recipients of BRAVO Awards this month were members of the IT staff who unselfishly provide support to our front-line staff. Without the supporting staff, helping low-income, elderly and disabled clients would be far more difficult during an era of staff reductions and diminishing resources. Congratulations to the six BRAVO Award honorees for the month of April!

- **Carlos Peña**, Information Technology Department.
- **Ignacio Segura**, Housing Counselor, Housing Department.
- **Febe Rodriguez**, Caseworker, Northeast Center.
- **Juan Manuel Vasquez**, Information Technology Coordinator, Main Office.
- **Veronica Ibarra**, Caseworker, East Side Center.
- **Alfredo Muñoz**, Adult Education Office.

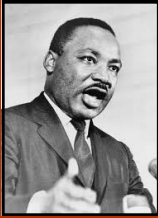


Springtime in El Paso!



"A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



"If you can't feed a hundred people, feed just one."

-Mother Teresa



"We need to steer clear of this poverty of ambition, where people want to drive fancy cars and wear nice clothes and live in nice apartments but don't want to work hard to accomplish these things. Everyone should realize their full potential."

-Barack Obama



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for the rich and eliminating corporate giveaways. Instead, she says, the proposals aim to reduce the deficit entirely on the backs of the people who can least carry the burden – the poor, the elderly and the disabled. The fact is, anti-poverty programs like the ones administered by Project BRAVO and other community action agencies in the U.S. are not now, nor have they ever been, a drain on the national budget. According to the Coalition on Human Needs, local anti-poverty agencies like Project BRAVO generate \$6.54 from state, local and private sources for every dollar received from Washington D.C. In addition to that, every person who is lifted out of poverty contributes positively to the overall economic structure of the community. Proudly, Project BRAVO is doing exactly what it is designed to do: Helping people out of poverty. However, the approach being used by Congress to reduce the deficit will create more poverty, more hardship and more economic distress – not less. Clearly, it is a lesson not yet learned in the halls of Congress: Sitting on the wrong side of the limb while pruning the tree branch is not wise.



Initiative Seeks End to Poverty In 10 Years

A national initiative aimed at eliminating poverty within ten years is now fully underway with the backing of hundreds of local and national organizations. Organizers point out that more than 43.5 million Americans live below the official poverty line - which is now approximately \$22,000 for a family of four - and nearly 15.5 million children are poor in this country. Inequality of wealth has reached record highs - it is greater than at any time since 1929. Now, increasing unemployment, high prices for gas and food, and a continuing foreclosure crisis are putting growing numbers of families at risk, exacting a high moral and economic cost on all Americans. Given the persistence of poverty over recent decades, it is understandable that many Americans consider cutting poverty an impossible task. This is not true. There have been periods throughout American history when economic gains were more equitably shared and the country was able to significantly reduce poverty. The Half in Ten campaign has begun its effort to encourage agencies and members of the private and public sector to work positively together toward eliminating poverty within the next ten years.

Project BRAVO Joins City in First Time Home Buyer Program

Project BRAVO's Housing Team has begun working with the City of El Paso to generate qualified applicants for a new program designed specifically for first-time home buyers. The new partnership with the City of El Paso Community and Human Development Housing Program Division will enhance Project BRAVO's ability to help low and moderate income residents to achieve their goal of home ownership. "In order to qualify, a household's gross annual income must be between 60-percent and 90-percent of the median income for the City of El Paso," said Mark Marquez, Housing Program Specialist for the City of El Paso. Project BRAVO joins the program as a HUD-certified counseling agency. There are only

three such agencies in El Paso. Under the program, Project BRAVO will provide required housing counseling services to potential homebuyers. Among the key features of the program is the availability of "gap" financing which can greatly help first-time home buyers qualify for a mortgage. The program offers down payment and closing cost assistance for the purchase of affordable homes up to \$121,000.



¿Que ondas?

Executive Assistant **Tania Rice** took her vows of marriage to **Thomas Yegge** on March 12. Congratulations!



Community Relations Manager **Roy Ortega** celebrated his 1-year anniversary on March 29 at Project BRAVO.

Happy Birthday to **Mr. Ray Moreno**, AARP volunteer in the South Side office, March 25.

