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Happy Thanksgiving!



The

BRAVO Newsletter

November 2011 Volume 2 Issue 11

Even In Hard Times, Community Helps Poor

By Roy Ortega

During a month when Americans traditionally offer thanks for the great bounty our country has to offer, there is growing concern over the nation's ability to help the poor during hard times ahead. A recently-published report prepared by the **Community Action Partnership** in Washington D.C. paints a particularly grim picture of what the future holds for America's poor. The report, titled *"Facing The New Reality, Preparing Poor America For Harder Times Ahead,"* offers a pessimistic view of our country's ability to regain any semblance of economic strength and stability any time soon. The report points to several realities already in place including a federal government that is increasingly unwilling to invest in job-creation initiatives. Combined with dramatic cuts in social services for the poor, many fear a dangerous rise in the national poverty level, which will inevitably place unprecedented stresses on social service agencies that serve the poor across the U.S.

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Energy Assistance Gets Boost

During last year's brutal winter weather, thousands of low-income residents in El Paso County found themselves burdened by high heating costs and an inability to pay their utility bills.

This fall and winter, Project BRAVO is expanding its energy assistance program thanks to additional funding under the government's **Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)**. Residents who qualify under federal and state income guidelines are eligible to receive assistance to pay for both gas and electric utilities. Low-income residents who live in rural or semi-rural areas of El Paso County

may also qualify for assistance to pay as much as \$300 in propane heating costs.

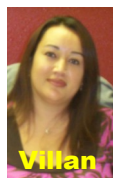
"If you would like to schedule an appointment just take your gas and electric bill to your neighborhood center," said Project BRAVO Community Services Manager **Trisha Thornton**.



"If you would like to schedule an appointment just take your gas and electric bill to your neighborhood center." - Trisha Thornton, Community Services Manager

- Project BRAVO Neighborhood Centers**
- Upper Valley/West - 7000 5th St. Canutillo
 - Northeast - 8815 Dyer St. Suite 300
 - South Side - 4838 Montana Avenue
 - East Side - 11206 Montwood
 - Ysleta - 400 S. Zaragoza
 - Main Office - 2000 Texas Avenue

Roving Case Worker Schedule Set



Residents in two outlying areas of El Paso County will now have access to many services provided by Project BRAVO thanks to the addition of a roving case worker at two locations in the Lower Valley. Patient Assistant Program (PAP) Coordinator **Angie Villan** will be conducting intake services by appointment at both locations as part of the agency's effort to better serve residents in those areas. In some isolated parts of El Paso County, the lack of adequate transportation services makes it difficult for many residents to travel to either one of the five Project BRAVO's neighborhood centers. Low-income, elderly and disabled residents will be able to apply for services including energy assistance under the CEAP and other programs. For appointment information, residents are urged to call 562-4100.

Schedule	
<u>Last Two Tuesdays of Each Month</u>	<u>Last Two Thursdays of Each Month</u>
Socorro Ramirez Community Center 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. 106 Peyton Road in Sparks	Circle of Friends Adult Day Care Center 1:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. 10750 North Loop Road in Socorro

GED and Citizenship Classes Offered Free

Concern over an uncertain economy has become one of the biggest motivations for a growing number of students enrolling in Project BRAVO's Adult Basic Education program (ABE). The program is offered alongside ongoing citizenship classes for immigrants hoping to become full-fledged citizens of the United States. Both programs are available at no cost to low-income residents of El Paso County. "More than a hundred adult students have participated in



Instructor Alfredo Muñoz works closely with students in Project BRAVO's Adult Basic Education program.

our adult basic education program this year," said ABE Instructor **Alfredo Muñoz**, who has dedicated his life to helping adults obtain their General Educational Development (GED) diplomas. Muñoz said he believes strongly that the path out of poverty is through educational development. Project BRAVO recently hired **Christina Hidalgo** as a new instructor in its citizenship instruction program.

Project BRAVO Citizenship Classes

- Offered in English and Spanish
- Location: 2000 Texas Avenue
- When: Fridays
- Time: 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Adult Basic Education GED

- Offered in English and Spanish
- Locations: Alternately at 2000 Texas Avenue & 400 S. Zaragoza at the Kennedy Bros. Community Center.

Call for dates & times 915-562-4100 ext. 119

Instructor: Mr. Alfredo Muñoz

THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY ACTION

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live.

We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

Cristina Foundation Awards Computers to PB



"I think computers have become the most empowering tool we've ever created." - Bill Gates.

The National Cristina Foundation was formed in 1984 after its founder, Dr. Bruce McMahan, noticed how his own daughter benefitted greatly from computers that had been donated to her school by a non-profit organization. Since that time, the foundation has dedicated itself to obtaining used computers from corporations all over the country. The used computers are then donated to schools and non-profit organizations all over the world. Last August, Project BRAVO was awarded a grant

from the foundation that included a total of 15 near-new Dell dual core computers and 5 laptop computers. "The community will benefit greatly from these computers because they will be made available to students in our GED and citizenship classes," said Project BRAVO Information Technology Coordinator **Juan Manuel Vasquez**. Project BRAVO's IT team, which includes Tech **Carlos Peña** has been busy preparing the refurbished equipment for eventual use in the agency's computer learning lab on the second floor of the main office located at 2000 Texas Avenue.



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In the last 50-years, agencies such as Project BRAVO have helped millions of Americans transition from poverty to prosperity. There is no question that many of the new realities described in the report pose a direct threat to the function of community action programs. Without government support, helping the poor will become a major challenge nationwide. Communities with already severely limited resources will be forced to turn to themselves to help those most in need. It will be left to local residents to address the most critical of all social problems in their own neighborhoods such as poverty, joblessness, hunger, health, education and welfare issues. The fact is, community action started this way.

In the 1950s and 1960s, local residents came together to find solutions to their own problems. If the conclusions in this report prove correct, there is no doubt El Paso residents will rally around Project BRAVO in order to maximize local resources and provide help to the neediest of their neighbors. Throughout its 46-year history, Project BRAVO has weathered several periods of economic uncertainty. Each time, the agency has managed to remain viable with the help of a resilient and caring community. Things may or may not get as bad as the CAP report suggests, but no matter what happens, Project BRAVO will prevail. During hard times, El Pasoans have always come together to *help each other*.