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The

BRAVO Newsletter

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Rodriguez Announces Retirement

Long-time Project BRAVO Weatherization/ARRA Supervisor **Maggie Rodriguez** admits she may be too young to retire, but after a long career of helping people, she says it's time to devote more of her time to her husband and her family at their winter home near Morelia, Mexico.

Eleven of the last years of Rodriguez' career have been spent providing weatherization services to low-income, elderly and disabled residents of El Paso County. It's a job she has performed enthusiastically from her very first day on the job.

Rodriguez recalls, however, that her initiation as a new employee of Project BRAVO in the year 2000 gave her slight pause. It was a tumultuous time for the agency. Leadership of the organization was undergoing some painful changes and employees were constantly worried about the stability of their jobs. "The temperament of everything was very different in those days," said Rodriguez. But in the intervening years, things got considerably better.

During her stint at Project BRAVO, the agency became El Paso County's leader in the federal government's Weatherization As-

sistance Program (WAP).

Under Rodriguez' expert guidance, Project BRAVO has weatherized nearly 1,400 homes and remains on target to successfully meet all of its contractual obligations under the current American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA/DOE) commitment.



"Ms. Rodriguez has been an integral part of Project BRAVO and the Weatherization team for over ten years," said Project BRAVO Executive Director **Laura Ponce**. "Her work has touched thousands of people in this community who received services from Project BRAVO to weatherize their homes or have heating/cooling appliances installed. I wish Maggie the best and hope she settles well in her retirement."

Alert Project BRAVO Employee Averts Tragedy

A quick-thinking member of the Project BRAVO maintenance staff is being lauded for his quick actions that saved the life an elderly tenant at one of the agency's apartment complexes.

It happened on Friday, September 9. Senior Maintenance Tech **Ruben Soto** had already gone home for the weekend when he received a call at about 8:30 p.m. from Housing Manager **Apolonio Montejano**. Tenants had reported a possible gas leak at the Virginia Complex at 1000 S. Virginia. When Soto ar-

rived, he quickly traced the smell of gas to an outside line. Soto then moved to alert residents of the complex.

Inside apartment No. 1, he encountered 83-year old **Pedro Escareno** who was preparing to turn-in for the evening.

"I checked the water heater to make sure it was alright," said Soto. "Then I heard a hissing sound coming from the kitchen stove and realized fumes were filling up the apartment." The elderly man had forgotten (continued next page)



Project BRAVO Senior Maintenance Tech Ruben Soto stands in front of the Virginia Complex at 1000 S. Virginia.



CSBG Funding Survives Initial Vote

A Congressional sub-committee has given its approval to the FY2012 appropriations bill amid growing confidence that funding for the Community Services Block Grant Program will survive budget cuts later this year.

Community Action Agencies across the country including Project BRAVO rely heavily on the program to carry out the most basic of services to their communities.

According to National Action Agency Executive Director David Bradley, the proposal will fund CSBG at the FY2011 level of \$678 million. Funding for HeadStart programs will be increased by

\$380 million from FY2011 for a total of \$7.5 billion. LIHEAP funding is \$1.1 billion below FY2011 levels, bringing the FY2012 level to \$3.6 billion.

The Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Subcommittee is chaired by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), who worked hard to protect CSBG from massive cuts proposed by Senate Republicans.

Despite the apparent support for the bill, observers believe CSBG funding still faces serious challenges in the next few months. Supporters are expressing confidence the measure will survive.



(Tragedy Averted, continued from page 1)

off the stove following his evening meal. Soto immediately turned the knobs to the "off" position. Montejano pointed out that if Soto had not entered the apartment at the precise moment he did, the water heater pilot flame or a spark from an electric light switch could have ignited an explosion with possibly deadly results. Although the outside gas leak and the stove leak were unrelated, Montejano could not rule out divine intervention. "I believe things happen for a reason," said Montejano, who credited Soto with saving the life of the elderly tenant. Soto humbly rejected any suggestion his actions were heroic. Montejano disagrees. "He (Soto) saved a life and that's worthy of note," he said.

Paint-a-Thon 2011 Facts

- 400 Volunteers participated from 18 different organizations
- The value of volunteer labor totaled \$11,600.00
- 17 Homes were painted from San Elizario to Canutillo
- Homeowners collectively saved \$8,262.00 in painting costs
- All of the homeowners were either elderly and/or disabled
- Since 1986, the Paint-a-Thon has painted 1,749 homes