



AN APPRECIATION
RITO MEDINA
 Founding Organizer of Tierra del Sol

BY ROSE GARCIA AND SAL ESTRADA

Rito Medina, the beloved incorporator and 31-year chairman of Tierra del Sol Housing Corporation of Las Cruces, New Mexico, died December 28 at 77 after a long illness. He exemplified community leadership at its finest.

Medina leaves a legacy of local services programs for the disadvantaged residents of New Mexico. He championed the cause of his community by creating community awareness among the disadvantaged, poor farmworkers, the elderly, and others throughout New Mexico. He successfully meshed his professional and volunteer activities with a humane approach for the benefit of disadvantaged persons. His warmth of personality and caring for others endeared him to those around him. He was well-respected by his peers as evidenced by their high regard and respect.

At his passing, Medina still was chairman of Tierra del Sol's board of directors.

Rito Medina's younger years started in farm work. He was born in 1927 and raised near Chamberino, not far from the New Mexico-Texas border. He also spent several years as a construction worker, driving earth-moving equipment until an accident left him incapacitated for physical work.

During the early years of the antipoverty programs, Medina trained as an outreach worker. Since the late 1960s, he had a long list of accomplishments related to community work. He was executive director of the Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion programs of Dona Ana County. He worked for the Home Education Livelihood program as a job developer, training coordinator, and program center director, and as a community organizer for the Community Action Agency of Dona Ana County.

As executive director of Tierra del Sol, recalls Rose



Garcia, "I was continually influenced and inspired by Medina. He always was vigilant in assuring that the work of Tierra del Sol kept true to the people's values and vision in serving the poor. Today, Tierra del Sol is nationally recognized and one of the leading affordable housing producers, with more than 4,500 units to its credit."

Medina organized other community associations to enhance residents' voice and representation in local service agencies that brought needed services to the poor. He was known as persistent, and conveyed to those he mentored in community work not to say no to clients, but to find a way to help them and not take no for an answer.

In 1994, NeighborWorks® America honored Rito Medina with its Dorothy Richardson Award for Resident Leadership – for Medina's years of volunteer efforts "in the trenches" to improve the lives of others. In 1996, the Housing Assistance Council awarded him the Skip Jason Award for his contribution to rural housing.

In 2003, state Rep. Antonio Lujan and Diana Bustamante of the Colonias Development Council announced the nonprofit Rito Medina Policy Center. The center is to be a place for experienced community leaders to mentor and encourage service-learning opportunities and community development work for young persons of the U. S. and Mexico border region.

For many around the state, Medina over the years came to symbolize Tierra del Sol. We would arrive to visit a community, and almost without fail one resident or another before long would exclaim, "Rito Medina is Tierra del Sol." ■

Rose Garcia (tdsgarcia@ziagold.net) and Sal Estrada (tdsestrada@qwest.net) are executive director of Tierra del Sol and community developer, respectively.

From Shoe Factory to Affordable Rentals: MNHS

Manchester Neighborhood Housing Services (MNHS) in New Hampshire has acquired an early 20th century shoe factory in an old industrial area of the city for conversion into some 60 units of affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income families.

“We are very excited about acquiring this property,” said Sal Steven-Hubbard, MNHS’s deputy director for neighborhood development, “it represents an opportunity to increase significantly the number of new affordable housing units and to continue revitalizing a neighborhood.”

The 70,000-square-foot, four-story, brick building is on a 1.5-acre site that is just west of a successful mill-to-housing conversion project, Twin Towers, which took place in the 1980s.

Acquisition cost \$1.25 million. Conversion is projected to cost \$11 million, according to Steven-Hubbard, and could take 30 months or more.

Financing for the acquisition was provided by the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund. ■

RUPCO to Build 40 Affordable Homes

Rural Ulster Preservation Company, a NeighborWorks® organization in Kingston, New York, is planning 40 affordable homes in three mixed-income projects over three years, and has received \$1 million in HOME funds to help write down the prices for buyers earning 50 percent to 80 percent of the area median.

“We have an affordable housing crisis in Ulster County,” says Kevin O’Connor, RUPCO’s executive director, where median sales prices have doubled, under pressure from migrating New York City residents.

Thirty of the affordable homes will be built as part of developments in Saugerties and Woodstock, totaling 109 units. Twenty will be built as part of a 29-unit development on 70 acres in Saugerties; 10 as part of an 80-unit development on 27 acres in Woodstock.

The Saugerties homes will be detached and have three bedrooms in 1,400 square feet. The Woodstock homes will be townhomes.

The remaining 10 affordable homes will be built as part of a third development, still being planned. ■

Atlanta Affiliate Wins Rouse Award

Reynoldstown Revitalization Corporation, a NeighborWorks® organization in Atlanta, and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston were selected for the 2004 Jim and Patty Rouse Award, which honors community-based organizations for excellence in neighborhood revitalization.

Reynoldstown Revitalization Corporation, established in 1989, focuses on providing affordable housing, rehabilitating existing housing, community outreach and education, establishing new businesses, and exploring microenterprise entrepreneurial ventures.

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, established in 1984, has won national acclaim for its facilitation of resident participation in complex planning processes that have yielded positive results for the Dudley area of Boston’s Roxbury/North Dorchester communities.

“I commend them for their unwavering commitment to serving very low-income families,” said Patty Rouse, vice present and secretary of The Enterprise Foundation, which sponsors the award. ■

NETWORK NEWS BRIEFS



Neighborhood Housing Services of the South Shore, Quincy, Massachusetts, together with Fr. Bill’s Place and the city of Quincy, has been awarded the National Community Development Association’s HOME

Program of Excellence Award for its \$765,000 Claremont House project, which provides 12 formerly homeless women with permanent housing and resident services.

Neighborhood Housing Services of Great Falls turned its “Business After Hours” event in January into a reception and celebration of its 25th anniversary of revitalizing neighborhoods in Great Falls and assisting affordable housing throughout Montana. It was incorporated in 1980.

Billy Campbell, an Inglewood, California, businessman and Allstate agent, has been named president of Inglewood Neighborhood Housing Services’ 14-member board of directors.

Felix Torres, whose accomplishments as executive director of Manchester Neighborhood Housing

Services in New Hampshire led Mayor Robert Baines to call him “one of the historic figures in the renaissance of downtown Manchester,” has become a senior business development manager with Fannie Mae in Washington, D.C.

Isay Gulley, executive director of Clearwater Neighborhood Housing Services, has been named the YWCA of Tampa Bay’s Humanitarian of the Year. Gulley, who’s been with NHS for 24 years, was selected for her leadership and strong commitment to the community.

Newsday honored **Cathy Mickens**, director of Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City’s Jamaica office, as one of its “Everyday Heroes, a special person who makes New York a better place.” Mickens also is celebrating her 30th anniversary at NHS Jamaica. ■

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