

LOCAL

Bank of America sponsors Habitat home in Rio Bravo

Special to the Times

Bank of America is sponsoring the construction of four new Habitat for Humanity homes in Rio Bravo near Laredo thanks to the bank's McColl Habitat for Humanity Project.

The bank is partnering with the Laredo Habitat for Humanity affiliate to build homes that will house four families who are in need of simple, decent, and affordable housing. This effort is the continuation of a five-home build that began in May of this year, with the first home built for a Sergio and Aracely Palacios.

The McColl Habitat for Humanity Project -- a five-year commitment named in honor of the bank's former chairman and CEO, Hugh McColl Jr. -- will build 120 new homes across America and 100 more in throughout Latin America for a total of 220 homes from 2002 through 2006. The Rio Bravo Build is a continuation of this community development grant. Mr. McColl, who will be joined by more than 100 bank associates and community volunteers, will be in Laredo to personally participate in the construction of the Rio Bravo Habitat homes.

"This is a perfect example of the commitment that Bank of America is making to improve the quality of life where we and our customers live and work," said Walter Elcock, Texas/New Mexico Consumer Bank executive and Texas president for Bank of America. "Dozens of volunteers from our company, our clients and

community volunteers will help build wonderful homes for deserving families in Laredo this year."

Habitat for Humanity serves those who earn between 30 and 50 percent of area median income. In Laredo, partner families must be willing to invest 500 hours of "sweat equity" by working with volunteers to construct the house they will live in or the home of someone else. The family must also agree to repay a zero interest mortgage, with terms that extend for 30 years.

The Rio Bravo homes will be constructed by the volunteer efforts of more than 100 Bank of America associates coming from across Texas and other states, including North Carolina, and members of the community are joining in the blitz build of the Rio Bravo homes.

"The partnership between Bank of America and Laredo Habitat for Humanity is about more than just building a house," said Carol Sherwood, executive director, Laredo Habitat for Humanity. "It is a clear demonstration of Bank of America's commitment to making a difference in local communities. Thanks to the support from Bank of America, four families, with very limited income who are in need of simple, decent, and affordable housing, will soon be moving into brand new, well-made comfortable homes. These families have participated from day one in the construction of their homes and will be working alongside the bank and community volunteers."

Hernandez is Latino Health Scholar

Laredo resident Angelica Hernandez was awarded a \$2,000 scholarship from PacifiCare's Latino Health Scholars program.

Hernandez is among nearly 50 scholarship winners in Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon and Washington, as well as Texas, where the scholarships were available.

Hernandez is enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin and is majoring in nursing.

"I'm really excited to have been chosen as a scholarship winner," said Hernandez. "My goal is to become a nurse. I want to be able to take what I've learned and give back to the community where I grew up and help people live healthier lives. I want to thank PacifiCare for helping me pursue a career in the medical field."

The scholarships are funded by the PacifiCare Foundation, the nonprofit, philanthropic arm of Cypress, Calif.-based PacifiCare Health Systems Inc. (NYSE: PHS) and are part of the company's Latino Health Scholars program. Designed to educate stu-

dents about career opportunities for Hispanics and Latinos in the health care field, the Latino Health Scholars program awards \$2,000 scholarships to Spanish-speaking, bicultural high-school students interested in pursuing careers in the health care industry.

In order to qualify for a scholarship, applicants are required to demonstrate a grade point average of 3.0 or better and be fluent in both Spanish and English. In addition, applicants must show proof of acceptance and enrollment into an approved health care program at a university, community college or accredited technical college.

According to the Office of Minority Health, there is a nationwide shortage of bilingual and bicultural health care professionals. Specifically, the shortage of Spanish-speaking personnel in nursing and other allied health professions, coupled with the growth of the Latino population in the United States, requires training and recruitment of an ever-greater number of qualified professionals.

Murder trial to begin Monday

BY LAUREL ALMADA
Times staff writer

A man charged with murder is scheduled to stand trial Monday in the 341st District Court.

Solano Hernandez III is charged with the beating death of Israel Ruelas Montes on Oct. 12, 2003.

He was initially indicted along with co-defendant Eduardo Galvan, who asked to have his case heard sepa-

ately.

Galvan is also charged with the aggravated assault of Humberto Segura Contreras, which allegedly occurred during the same incident.

The two victims were reportedly stopped at a traffic light at the intersection of McPherson and Jacaman roads when the two defendants allegedly approached them.

Galvan and Hernandez allegedly grabbed a pipe from the victim's vehicle and beat

the men.

Montes reportedly died of his injuries about a week later at a San Antonio hospital.

The defendants are facing up to 99 years or life imprisonment if convicted of the first-degree felony offense.

Hernandez's trial is expected to begin Monday with jury selection.

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