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Strong Gin from Broadway West
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Eden Housing's current board of directors

Local heroes (continued)

By MONICA L. BARBARA
PHOTOS COURTESY OF EDEN HOUSING

On December 11, 2008 Assembly Majority Leader Alberro Torrico recognized contributions of citizens in the Assembly District who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and generosity in their service to the community.

"Local heroes" include the Reed family of Fremont, Paddy Iyer of Union City, Harold Colon of Newark, Cossette Sun of Castro Valley, Ed Mullins of Hayward, Ray Maglalang of Milpitas, and John McWilliams of Pleasanton.

In addition to the local heroes awardees, Centro de Servicios was named the Community Partner Local Hero, Eden Housing was named the Non-profit of the Year, and Dr. Bhupinder Bhandari was given the Unity Award.

Local heroes: See Page 6

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Local heroes (continued)

In our final profile in this series, TCV learned about the accomplishments of Eden Housing of Hayward.

Established in 1968 by six activists, one of whom remains an active board member, Eden Housing has distinguished itself among local nonprofit organizations. The organization's focus on building and maintaining affordable housing for low income, disabled or senior citizens has resulted in the provision of over 5,000 such housing units since its founding.



Sara Conner Court in Hayward offers 57 units of affordable apartments for low income families and is the East Bay's first GreenPoint Rated affordable rental development.

While the organization was originally established to address these needs for residents of Alameda County, progress over the years has meant an expansion of services, now extended to 20 cities in six counties throughout the state.

Linda Mandolini is the organization's Executive Director and has been with Eden since 1996. "I wanted to work for one of the larger, regional non profit affordable housing providers," says Mandolini of her initial interest in working with Eden. "Eden kept coming up. [Eden is] an opportunity to work in communities and in neighborhoods but on a much bigger scale," continues Mandolini.

Eden Housing is essentially three entities operating under the mission to build and maintain high-quality, well-managed, service-enhanced affordable housing communities that meet the needs of lower income families, seniors and persons with disabilities. The first, Eden Housing, focuses on developing affordable housing for these populations. The second and third entities are Eden

Housing Management, Inc. and Eden Housing Resident Services, Inc., which focus on property management and resident support services, respectively.

Eden's most recent property under construction is the Almond Court Apartments in Manteca, and several other projects are in the pipeline, including a 98-unit housing complex for frail seniors in Fremont.

While the housing development focus of Eden is the most visual, it is the property management and resident services that Mandolini feels are the heart of the organization. "We are one of the first to deal with quality in aging portfolios," says Mandolini.

Attention to quality assurance in aging properties assures that communities such as the Josephine Lum Lodge, the organization's first multi-unit development, retain an atmosphere of desirability for its senior residents comparable to or surpassing that which it provided when first built in 1973.

Residential services provided by Eden cater to the same populations emphasized by development and management efforts: families, seniors and persons with disabilities. Nearly 10 programs are in operation to meet the needs of Eden's residents.

Among these programs is the innovative Digital Connectors, which provides IT training and skill development for young residents between the ages of 14 and 20. Says Mandolini, "We've really expanded our programming and work with families and children. The Digital Connectors program gives [participants] solid technology skills and exposes them to opportunities they wouldn't normally have. We are looking to expand this program to properties throughout the bay area."

Other services include financial literacy for both adults and children. "We're working to expand our programs," added Mandolini, "we've had a lot of success."

Eden's focus on community development on an individual level in addition to its physical community developments is indicative of the organization's advocacy-based roots. Mandolini captures the organization's tone best with their unofficial motto, "If you're not willing to live in it, you shouldn't be building it."

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