Local heroes (continued)

By Monica L. Barbara
Photos courtesy of Eden Housing

On December 11, 2008 Assembly Majority Leader AlbertoTorrent 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 Lyon of Union City, Harold Cohan of Newark, Converse Sun of Castro Valley, Ed Mullins of Hayward, Ray Maglish of Milpitas, and John Mc Williams of Pleasanton.

In addition to the local heroes awardees, Centre & Services 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
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.

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 ensures that communities such as the Josephine Inn 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're 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 its unofficial motto: "If you're not willing to live in it, you shouldn't be building it."

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