

National NeighborWorks® Association

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National NeighborWorks® Association Presents Excellence Awards to Three Outstanding Practitioners

Arlington, VA – The National NeighborWorks® Association (NNA) presented three awards to outstanding individuals in the NeighborWorks® Network who have demonstrated innovative talent and dedicated commitment to the housing and community development industry. Prizes were awarded April 7, 2011 at the Annual NeighborWorks® Executive Directors Symposium in Arlington, VA in the following three categories:

1. Lifetime Achievement - Prize \$5,000
2. Practitioner of the Year - Prize \$2,500
3. Emerging Leader - Prize \$2,500

Three, non-NeighborWorks®, industry-related executives and last year's winners judged the 2011 candidates. All judges commented on the quality of submissions received and noted how difficult it was to select just one winner.

Lou Tisler, Executive Director of Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Cleveland and President of NNA, presented the awards to the three winners:

Lifetime Achievement Award: Rodney Fernandez, Executive Director, Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation, Ventura, CA.

Fernandez has led Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation ("Cabrillo") since its inception in 1981. Cabrillo is one of the top affordable housing community development corporations in the country and grew out of Fernandez's work in the 1970's to empower Latino farm workers in the rural town of Saticoy, CA to organize and prevent the razing of their substandard homes and eviction by the farmer's growers.

Fernandez's 30 years of work leading Cabrillo includes several notable achievements and awards. In 2002, Fernandez led a team to plan, promote and execute a landmark regional housing conference that brought more than 250 practitioners, advocates, funders and community leaders together to discuss the future of affordable housing in this high-cost area of California. This annual conference series continues to this day and has drawn approximately 2,000 people over its nine years to shape the dialogue around affordable housing.

During the last four years, Fernandez played a key role in establishing a regional Housing Trust Fund to ensure an ongoing source of local capital for low- and moderate-income housing. Despite the recession, the Trust Fund has secured enough grant dollars to sustain a part-time CEO, formally established a Board of Directors, applied for non-profit status, and secured a \$500,000 match from the County of Ventura for Proposition 1C funding dedicated to housing trust funds.

Fernandez's leadership and management philosophy of planning, reflection and evaluation has both tangible and intangible results, evident in Cabrillo's reputation, ongoing "Exemplary" rating by NeighborWorks® America, year-over-year increase in net assets, and a 30th year that will include six projects and more than 250 affordable homes in construction, all during a housing market downturn. It is equally evident in the longevity of senior staff (three of whom have been with Cabrillo for more than 20 years) and the value placed on reflection, improvement and participation.

As Fernandez retires, the NeighborWorks Network loses a thoughtful and exemplary leader. However, Fernandez's personality and lasting accomplishments will no doubt inspire future leaders for the housing and community development field.

Bertha Garcia from Cabrillo received the award on Fernandez's behalf.

Practitioner of the Year: Marianne Garvin, President and CEO of Community Development Corporation of Long Island ("CDCLI"), Centereach, NY.

In 2010, Garvin developed a 94-unit multifamily rental housing preservation project called Twin Oaks in Hempstead Village by garnering local approvals and the financing necessary to begin the rehabilitation. Occupancy is scheduled for winter of 2011. The Twin Oaks project includes two vacant residential structures and one commercial building in a distressed downtown community in Nassau County. The three buildings have been vacant more than two years and have blighted the neighborhood. The financing package included federal low income housing tax credits, state tax credits, HOME funds, state subsidies and NeighborWorks America rehabilitation funds. This is one of the very rare multifamily rental housing projects to be approved on Long Island, due to a long term challenge with NIMBY-ism (Not In My Back Yard). The successful re-development of these dilapidated buildings will demonstrate to the community that low income people can be housed and help to upgrade and stabilize the neighborhood.

Another mixed-use project is in the development stage in Suffolk County. Garvin is working to rezone and get site plan approval for a 15 acre site where a movie theater has sat vacant for eight years. After demolition, the site will accommodate a new urban design for a walkable downtown with retail and affordable family rental housing.

Garvin was elevated to CEO of CDCLI in 2009 just as the economy and housing markets had crashed. Over the subsequent two years she successfully implemented major initiatives that have positively advanced the mission of the corporation, improved the financial health of the organization, increased the positive visibility of the corporation on Long Island, in New York State and nationally, and most importantly, continued to serve Long Island families in a variety of ways.

Emerging Leader: Patricia Garcia-Duarte, President and CEO of Neighborhood Housing Services of Phoenix ("NHS of Phoenix").

In just a few short years, Garcia-Duarte has taken NHS of Phoenix from an operating budget of \$2.5MM in 2006 to \$5.6MM in 2011. The number of full-time employees has

increased from 17 employees to 36. Through her leadership, NHS of Phoenix's credibility, capacity and impact have grown just the same.

Garcia-Duarte spearheaded innovative solutions for neighborhood stabilization by acquiring two partially completed and foreclosed housing subdivisions. Vista del Sol, a development in south Phoenix was started in 2005 by a private developer and was designed as a 21-unit "green" subdivision. The private developer began building 7 homes, but only completed and sold one. NHS of Phoenix completed the remaining 6 homes after purchasing the subdivision, including 14 ready buildable lots, at a Trustee Sale in April 2008.

In 2010 NHS of Phoenix was selected as "Most Valuable Partner" by the Phoenix Housing and Urban Development (HUD) field office for supporting HUD's initiative of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. NHS of Phoenix was also awarded a Bank of America "Safety Net" grant, along with three other nonprofit agencies in a collaboration to create a model for a pathway to housing and financial stability based on their individual services and programs and their collective experience for both short-term and long-term solutions.

As evidenced by her work and her compassion, Garcia-Duarte has been a tireless advocate on behalf of affordable housing and community economic development in Arizona. Her ability to identify with hard-working first-time homeowners; her experience in speaking the language of our financial partners; her expertise in building relationships across sectors and among collaborators; and her passionate energy to make a difference in our communities highlights her as a shining example of fostering a Network of Excellence.

About National NeighborWorks® Association (NNA)

NNA is the national association of NeighborWorks® organizations (NWOs) that advocate for better neighborhoods and housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. Our members use Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (d/b/a NeighborWorks® America) funds to leverage private dollars in order to create new homeowners, revitalize distressed communities, and build single family and multi-family housing for low- to moderate-income families in urban and rural communities throughout the country.

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