



TEXAS LOW INCOME HOUSING INFORMATION SERVICE

HOUSING MATTERS

A newsletter dedicated to the goal that every Texan should have decent, safe, affordable housing

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2005 Texas Houser Awards honor three successful poverty warriors



HOUSER (hau'zr) a person committed to raising the quality of life through improving the availability of and access to shelter for low-income families.

In Houston, poor, inner-city residents are receiving assistance in saving for their futures, so they can one day buy a home, or even start a business. In El Paso, families are working together to build sturdy, affordable homes. In one East Austin neighborhood, residents who feared they would be displaced by gentrification may now be able to continue living in the community they have called home for generations.

These stories of hope have been possible thanks to the work of three individuals dedicated to fighting poverty and providing decent housing for needy Texans. On November 1, the Texas Low Income Housing Information Service (TxLIHIS) recognized these champions of housing justice with the 2005 Texas Houser Awards.

The 2005 honorees are: Stephan Fairfield, CEO of Covenant Community Capital; State Representative Eddie Rodriguez; and Nancy Hanson, Executive Director of the Lower Valley Housing Corporation. TxLIHIS Board President Veon McReynolds, Ph.D. along with TxLIHIS co-directors Karen Paup and John Henneberger presented the awards.

Each year, TxLIHIS gives three individuals or organizations a Texas Houser Award. The awards are given in three categories: community houser, activist houser, and government houser, in recognition of the importance of tackling the housing crisis from multiple sectors.

The term "houser" has its roots in history: in the 1930's reformers and activists calling themselves "housers" dedicated themselves to eliminating widespread poverty that was characterized by substandard and unaffordable housing.

The housers were guided by the belief that everyone deserves a safe, decent, affordable home and they worked to improve living conditions for the very poor. Their tactics combined social science and popular journalism, architectural experimentation and political activism.

The work of these pioneers of housing justice became such an integral part of history that dictionaries of the time included a definition of "houser" as "a person committed to raising the quality of life through improving the availability of and access to shelter for low-income families."

Today, dedicated individuals continue to stand up for the basic human right to decent housing. These individuals recognize the injustice in the decrepit conditions over two million Texans live in, and have taken action to effect positive social change.

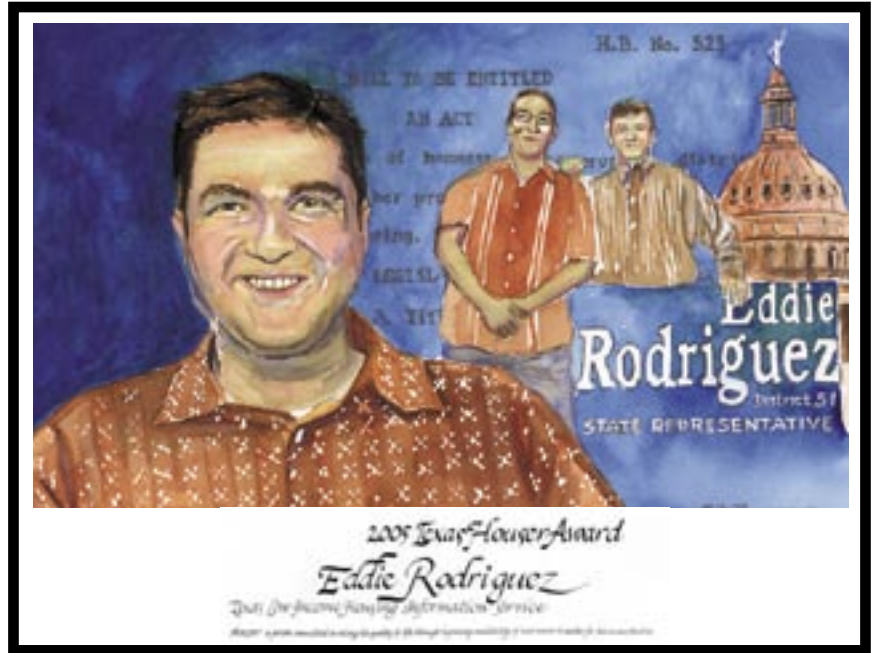
The Texas Houser Awards acknowledge these Texans who are fighting to eliminate the terrible living conditions facing so many Texas families. TxLIHIS believes that the housing crisis will only be solved through the committed efforts of advocates, community leaders and policy makers like Stephan, Nancy and Eddie. We are recognizing them for their vital role in shaping a future where even the poorest Texans have access to quality housing and neighborhoods.

Eddie Rodriguez

government houser

During the two terms that Eddie Rodriguez has represented District 51 at the Texas Legislature, he has worked diligently to preserve housing affordability in gentrifying communities like the one he represents on Austin's Eastside, where working poor families are struggling to afford to live in the neighborhood they have called home for generations.

During the most recent session of the Texas Legislature, Rep. Rodriguez sponsored and passed HB 525, which gives the City of Austin a means of protecting the character of residential areas near the urban core. This includes creating low and moderate-income homeownership opportunities, while providing for a gradual expansion of high density, commercial development that conforms to community expectations and coexists with the residents of owner and renter-occupied, single-family homes.



2005 Houser Award sponsors (as of October 26)

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Stephan Fairfield

activist houser

Stephan Fairfield is CEO of Covenant Community Capital, which works to empower low-income communities in Houston to develop affordable housing and create small businesses. Stephan not only tackles the problem of substandard housing in Houston's poor neighborhoods, but also works to develop long-term solutions to poverty through several innovative programs. One such program is the Smart-Savings Program, which is designed to help low-income families establish a pattern of regular savings.

Stephan was previously the director of the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation in Houston. Over his twelve years at Fifth Ward the organization built over 700 housing units and created nearly 600 jobs. Today he continues to work to broaden opportunities for low-income families by fostering the creation of decent housing, safe neighborhoods, and steady jobs.



Nancy Hanson - Lower Valley Housing Corporation

community houser

Nancy Hanson is the executive director of the Lower Valley Housing Corporation in El Paso, which assists low-income families in building homes they can afford. Since 1990, Lower Valley has built or rehabilitated over 1,000 affordable housing units and has developed 15 subdivisions in the cities of Fabens, Horizon, and El Paso. Six-hundred and forty-eight of these homes were built by low-income people themselves, who devoted ten months to constructing their home from the ground up.

In a large part due to Nancy's hard work, the Lower Valley Housing Corporation is operating one of the most successful self-help programs in the nation.



Mary Sanger
Southwest Housing
Tropicana Homes
Wendy Watriss & Fred Baldwin

Wiley & Sue Hopkins
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Kevin Jewell
Russell Jones
Rebecca Lightsey
Standish Meacham & Steven Salzman

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Support the Houser Awards

You can join the sponsors and contributors listed above in supporting the Texas Houser Awards and the work of the Texas Low Income Housing Information Service (TxLIHIS) by making a tax-deductible contribution.

The mission of TxLIHIS is to support low-income Texans' efforts to achieve the American Dream of a decent, affordable home in a quality neighborhood. We pursue our mission by:

- Organizing and empowering low-income people and communities to take the initiative to solve their community development problems;
- Advocating safe, clean, decent housing for all Texas families;
- Discovering solutions to the affordable housing crisis in Texas through research and evaluation of low-income housing and community programs; and
- Educating consumers and providing information about low-income housing programs.

The artist

This year's awards are the work of Pat Bailey, an artist with Art From the Streets (AFTS), a local arts program for the homeless. Sales of Pat's art have supported her recent move into an apartment of her own. "I'm pulling myself up by my bootstraps this year," Pat says. Last year, Pat was working on her art from the confines of her car, in public parks and churches, or wherever she could find a quiet place. Now, Pat says she "has a place to go—a place where I belong."



Pat portrays the unique personalities of the Houser Awards honorees through vivid watercolor portraits. Pat's art will be displayed at the 13th Annual AFTS annual arts show on November 5 and 6, from noon to 5 p.m. at the Austin Resource Center for the Homeless (ARCH).

Previous Texas Houser Award winners



Gretchen Lara Shartle
- activist houser 2001
Expanding Horizons
Foundation



Ora Lee Nobles
- community houser 2001
Blackshear Residents
Organization



Harryette Ehrhardt
- government houser 2001
Texas House of
Representatives



Fred Fuchs
- activist houser 2003
Texas Rio Grande Legal
Aid



Ramona Utti
- community houser 2003
Ripley Arnold Residents
Association



Senator Eddie Lucio
- government houser 2003
Texas Senate



Walter Moreau
- activist houser 2004
Foundation Communities



Amistad Housing
Development Corp
- community houser 2004



Edwina Carrington
- government houser 2004
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www.texashousing.org



**Texas Low Income Housing
Information Service**

508 Powell Street
Austin, TX 78703-5122

Three Texans honored with
2005 Texas Houser Awards