



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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## 2007 Texas Houser Awards



November 7, 2007—Today, a staggering three million Texas families live in substandard, overcrowded conditions, many without basic necessities such as clean running water and indoor plumbing. The lack of safe, decent, affordable housing for Texas families is unacceptable.

The work of the Texas Low Income Housing Information Service (TxLIHIS) is guided by the belief that housing poverty can be eradicated if concerned citizens come together and work for change. On November 7 we are honoring three individuals who have stood up for change and helped give Texas families the security and dignity of a safe, decent, affordable home.

The recipients of the 2007 Texas Houser Award are: Betsy Julian, fair housing advocate; Rey Ocañas, community developer; and Robert Doggett, attorney and advocate. TxLIHIS Board President Veon McReynolds, Ph.D. along with TxLIHIS staff Karen Paup, John Henneberger, and Kristin Carlisle are presenting the awards.

Each year, TxLIHIS gives three individuals or organizations a Texas Houser Award. 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 work of those anti-poverty pioneers became so integral 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’s housers approach the housing issue from many different angles, from fair housing to consumer protection to community investment.


Betsy, attorney, housing advocate, former HUD Fair Housing chief and now executive director of the Inclusive Communities Project is known for her unflagging efforts to advance fair housing rights and integrate Texas communities. An

**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.**

insistent and passionate advocate throughout her career, Betsy has demanded that racially integrated housing remain a priority among housers and policy makers.

Rey strengthened the role of nonprofit, community-based organizations in the development of quality affordable homes during his tenure as executive director of the Texas Association of Community Development Corporations (TACDC). Rey’s commitment to revitalizing low-income neighborhoods continues today in his role as community development officer for Wachovia Bank.

Robert is a strong voice for housing justice in Texas. An attorney for Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid (TRLA), Robert has successfully represented low-income Texans in a wide range of housing-related disputes and has helped them obtain safe, decent, affordable housing. He combines his legal work with a commitment to improving public policy. As a volunteer for TxLIHIS at the Texas Legislature, he played a pivotal role in reforming Texas law to expand housing opportunities for Texas families.

The Texas Houser Awards acknowledge these Texans who see the injustice of poverty housing and work to eliminate it through systemic change. TxLIHIS believes that the housing crisis will only be solved through the committed efforts of people like Betsy, Rey and Robert. 

# Betsy Julian

## *fair housing advocate*

Betsy's years of work as a champion of racial and economic integration began upon graduation from the University of Texas School of Law, when she started a law practice focused on poverty and civil rights. Betsy was co-counsel in the landmark housing desegregation cases against the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Dallas (*Walker v. HUD*) and East Texas (*Young v. Pierce*), and the Dallas City Council redistricting case (*Williams, et al v. City of Dallas*), which significantly expanded minority representation on the Dallas City Council. In the 1990s, Betsy served in the Clinton Administration at HUD. Additionally, she established the Texas Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. Today, Betsy is the Executive Director of the Inclusive Communities Project (ICP), which works to promote fair housing policies and create racially and economically inclusive communities. 🏠



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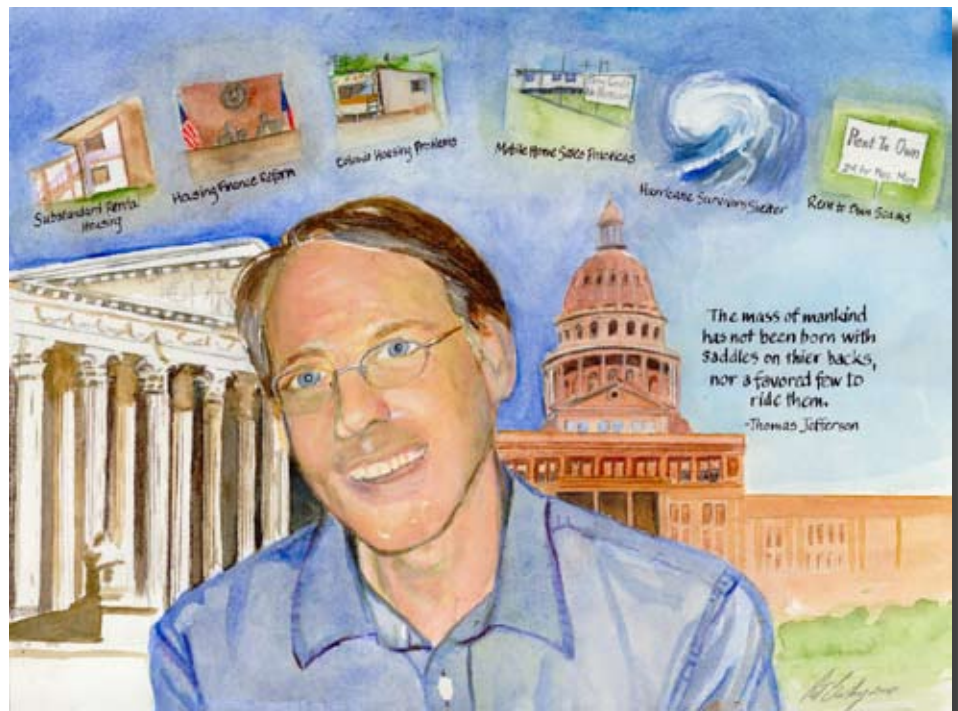
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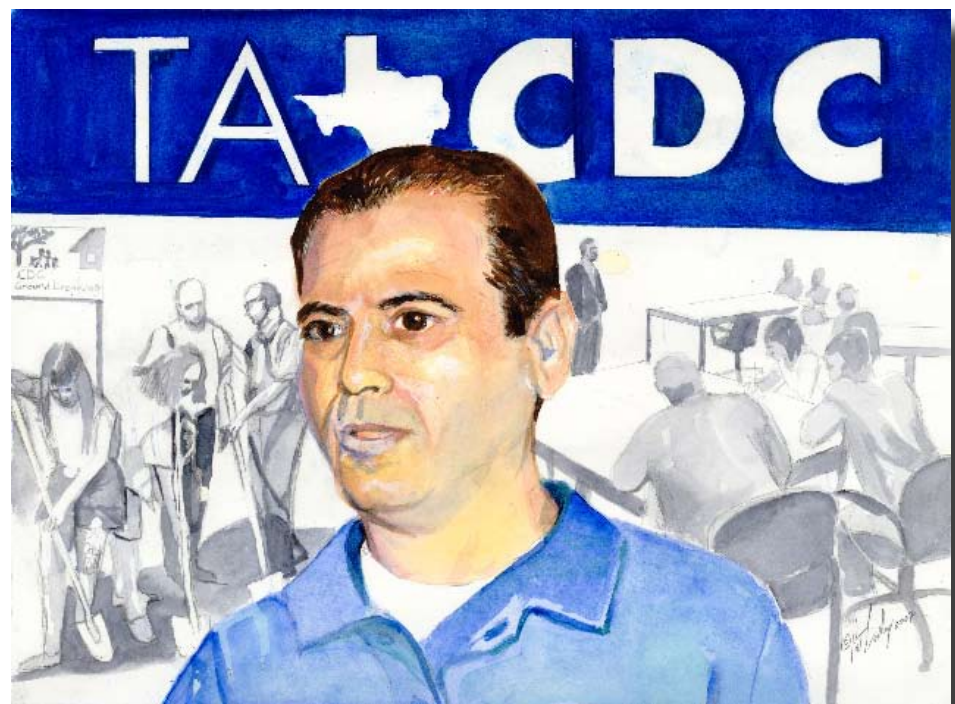
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## Robert Doggett *attorney advocate*

Robert has advanced the cause of affordable housing in his dual roles as a TRLA attorney representing low-income clients in housing-related disputes, and as a volunteer policy advocate at the Texas Legislature. For years, Robert has been one of the most effective voices for housing at the Texas Legislature. This legislative session, he fought hard to give new legal remedies to residents living in border colonias without water and sewer services. He also took on Texas' powerful manufactured housing industry to successfully advocate a bill that provides greater protections to manufactured home consumers. In the 2005 session, he helped draft and was crucial in securing support for the strongest piece of homebuyer protection legislation in recent memory. The bill stops the most egregious abuse of "rent-to-own" and "contract for deed" home sales schemes. 🏠



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Kathy Tyler  
Bob and Angie Ward  
Judge Stephen Yelenosky



## Rey Ocañas *community developer*

During his seven years as executive director of the Texas Association of Community Development Corporations (TACDC), Rey poured his time and energy into elevating the role of nonprofit, community development corporations (CDCs) in the development of quality affordable homes for Texas' families. Thanks to Rey's selfless work, CDCs have greater capacity to build homes that offer more than just quality, affordable shelter, but also provide services such as after-school tutoring. Since leaving TACDC, Rey has continued his commitment in the private sector. Today, as a community development officer at Wachovia Bank, he is guiding the bank to support model affordable housing developments.

Rey is a member of the board of the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). 🏠

## Support the Texas 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

For the past three years, the Houser Awards portraits have been 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 supported her move into an apartment of her own. Previously, Pat worked on her art in parking lots, in public parks and churches, or wherever someone would offer her space. Having a stable place to call home has helped Pat advance her career as an artist.



Pat portrays the unique personalities of the Houser Awards honorees through vivid watercolor portraits. She uses her creative talent to create images that reflect the honorees' contributions toward housing justice.

## Kathy Tyler, the calligrapher

Since the Houser Awards luncheon in 2004, Kathy Tyler, founding TxLIHIS board member and talented calligrapher, has been contributing her skills to the crafting of lettering on our honorees' portraits.

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Information Service**

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Three Texans honored with  
2007 Texas Houser Awards