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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



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## **CEDC'S COMMUNITY BUILDERS RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY**

VENTURA, CA -- Kathryn Benner and Priscila Cisneros, from Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) in Ventura County, CA, were recognized last week with a National Community Building and Organizing award from NeighborWorks® America ([www.nw.org](http://www.nw.org)). The award ceremony took place in Atlanta during the annual meeting for this national program.

Benner and Cisneros are the “dynamic duo” and co-Community Building Managers at CEDC. Kathryn has worked with CEDC for nine years and Priscila, for six. CEDC’s Community Building and Neighborhood Revitalization work has achieved statewide and national reputation for outstanding community building initiatives and projects, such as leadership development training for dozens of residents at CEDC’s 22 rental properties.

Kathryn and Priscila are part of a community building team that has worked together to co-power community residents in partnership with community activists to achieve such transformative outcomes as initiating bus service in non-served transportation corridors; shutting down unsavory bars in family neighborhoods; and facilitating youth violence prevention learning circles for parents and youth in a community that has experienced murder, bullying and intimidation. Their introduction of innovative programs such as Arts for Action’s “Paint Not Prison” and the mural arts to youth groups recently led to an Intergenerational Mural Project that brought elders and youth together to create an inspirational “past-meets-present” cultural portrait that represents the contrast and integration of farmworker immigrants and their children. The seeds of that idea came from youth who attended a NeighborWorks Community Leadership Training Institute ([http://www.nw.org/network/training/courses/specialized\\_cli.asp](http://www.nw.org/network/training/courses/specialized_cli.asp)).

Kathryn and Priscila carry on the CEDC tradition of practicing “Conocimiento” -- a “getting-to-know-you encounter question” posed at the start of any meeting or gathering. Conocimiento builds understanding, which builds unity, and therefore power. CEDC believes in a community building approach where self-determination and community transformation begins by paying attention to the power of the individual, supporting him or her to find their unique voice, and to use that voice in collaboration with others.

NeighborWorks’ Community Building and Organizing Program and its Community Engagement Professional Certificate Program support CEDC’s Community Building and Organizing Projects by

investing in staff capacity and professional development. "Without the vast peer network that makes up the Community Building and Organizing Program membership and the high-quality trainings offered at the NeighborWorks America National Institute Training, the Community Building Team would not have been able to tap into resources and knowledge to support community leadership and power building through relationships," says Ms. Cisneros. "We are highly honored to have received this award and to share this recognition with the entire CEDC staff and Board, as well as residents, supporters and community members."

NeighborWorks America recognized nine outstanding individuals across the country who are committed to supporting resident leadership development, community building activities and resident-led initiatives in the neighborhoods where they work.

The other awardees were Carol Bronson from NeighborWorks Great Falls, MT; Julia King from LaCasa Inc in Goshen, Indiana; Alexis Collins from Orlando Neighborhood Improvement Corporation; Kevin Johnson from Madison Park Development Corporation; and Douglas Le from Asian Americans from Equality.

### **About CEDC**

CEDC is a private non-profit community development corporation that provides comprehensive housing services, through a community building approach, in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties. Since its incorporation in 1981, CEDC has built 1,634 units of affordable for-sale and multi-family rental homes, and manages 973 affordable rental units. CEDC's NeighborWorks® HomeOwnership Center has assisted more than 817 families into home ownership through education, counseling, and lending services since 2004. This includes more than \$110 million in first and second mortgage financing and down payment assistance. CEDC is a chartered member of NeighborWorks®, a national network of more than 235 community development and affordable housing organizations. This year marks CEDC's 32nd year of operation.

### **About NeighborWorks America**

For 35 years, NeighborWorks America has created opportunities for people to improve their lives and strengthen their communities by providing access to homeownership and to safe and affordable rental housing. In the last five years, NeighborWorks organizations have generated more than \$19.5 billion in reinvestment in these communities. NeighborWorks America is the nation's leading trainer of community development and affordable housing professionals. For more information about NeighborWorks America, and to register for the Training Institute, visit [www.nw.org](http://www.nw.org).

### **About Arts for Action**

The mission of Arts for Action (A4A) is to build and sustain a movement for social, environmental, and economic justice, arts education and activism, education, and community organizing. Working with primarily "at-risk" youth and families, A4A provides training, infrastructure, leadership development, implements dynamic interdisciplinary curricula, and provides other resources at the A4A community based workshop centralized in Downtown Oxnard. A4A utilizes multicultural and interdisciplinary forms of youth culture and art incorporating global forms of muralism, media, dance, music, public arts and community organizing to develop leadership, raise consciousness, and create both systems and cultural change. A4A engages the community in every step of the campaign process including research,

advocacy, public speaking, strategizing, and outreach. In this time of education cuts, A4A has seen arts and other programs cut in our area, and has aligned all of its programs with the California State education standards.

**About Roberto Vargas**

Dr. Roberto Vargas is nationally recognized for his exceptional skills in meeting facilitation and for creating interactive environments that support multicultural groups to achieve high levels of creativity and success. Roberto provides leadership coaching, team-building and planning consultation to advocacy, educational, corporate, and community service organizations throughout the United States. His vision is greater health, respect and success for all, and his dynamic approach assists proactive organizations to achieve optimal results. (Proactive individuals and organizations are those that seek to lift our human potential and advance a better world in all that they do.) Roberto is an educator and consultant on personal and group empowerment, and a ceremony leader for activist communities and organizations. He launched his career by co-founding several innovative community mental health centers committed to utilizing cultural wisdom for healing. He collaborated in developing the Razalogia Approach, a powerful facilitation method suited for people pursuing community empowerment and learning; and developed Porvida™ teachings for personal, leadership, and organizational development. A native Californian, Roberto received his Masters in Social Work and Doctorate in Public Health from the University of California at Berkeley (UCB). Roberto lives in Ventura, California, and often collaborates with his wife and daughters who share similar commitments.

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