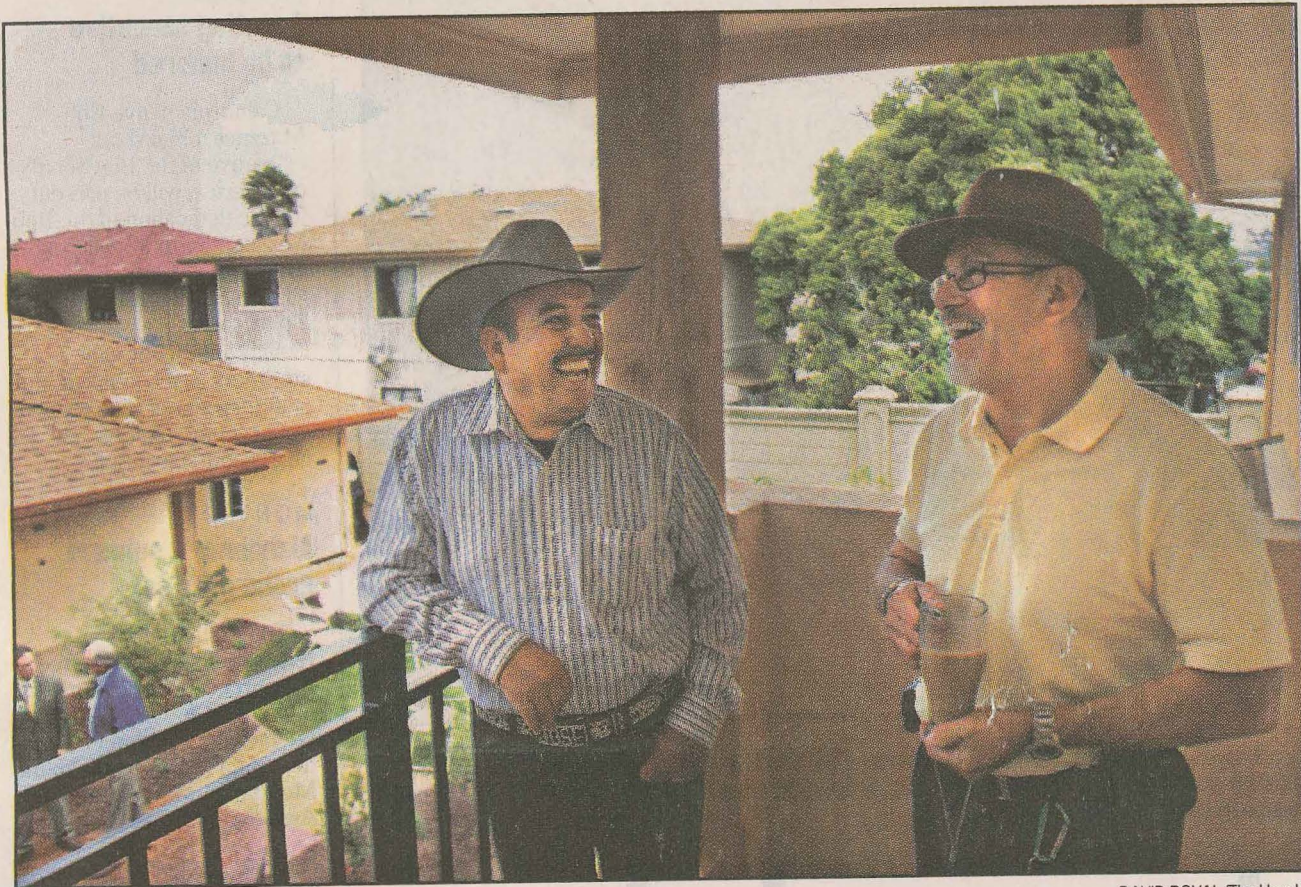


"I'll just say it was a lot harder being homeless. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to live in a place where I can afford to meet my obligations."

— Raymond Moreno, La Gloria Senior Apartments resident



DAVID ROYAL/The Herald

La Gloria Senior Apartments neighbors Jose Urquizo, left, and Raymond Moreno, both 65, laugh after Moreno was unexpectedly called to tell his story from the lectern on Friday during the grand opening for the Salinas complex.

A 'la glorious' day for a few fortunate seniors

PRISTINE COMPLEX PROVIDES
23 LOW-INCOME UNITS

By DENNIS TAYLOR
Herald Staff Writer

One of the new residents of La Gloria Senior Apartments stepped up to the microphone Friday to address the large crowd that was on hand for a ceremony celebrating the grand opening of the new development in Salinas. Raymond Moreno spoke haltingly, in a quiet, emotion-charged voice.

"I won't go into a lot of details about my

background, or where I came from," he said. "I'll just say it was a lot harder being homeless. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to live in a place where I can afford to meet my obligations."

Moreno is one of the low-income senior citizens who were fortunate enough to rent one of the 23 affordable units in the pristine new complex at 539 East Market St., a project spearheaded by the Community Housing

Please see Senior page A11



Raymond Moreno photographs CHISPA staff, supporters and honorees as they cut the ribbon for the complex.

Senior

From page A1

Improvement Systems and Planning Association (CHISPA). The nonprofit housing developer is responsible for building more than 2,300 single-family homes and multifamily and senior apartments in Monterey County since 1980.

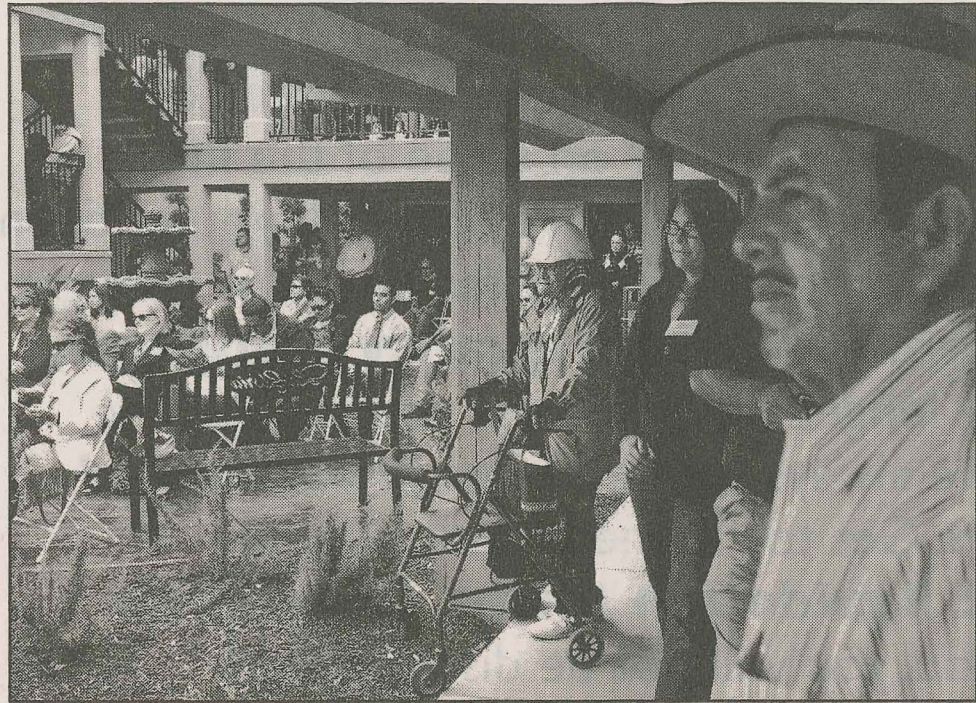
In addition to the La Gloria complex, CHISPA operates four other apartment buildings in Salinas, Marina and Monterey for low and very-low income seniors.

Rent for the one-bedroom units at La Gloria runs between \$350 to \$600. The market rate for one-bedroom apartments in the neighborhood surrounding La Gloria runs about \$700 to \$800 according to Guillermo Nieto, the director of housing management.

La Gloria, a three-story structure that sits on a half-acre lot, features a manicured courtyard garden with a fountain, a resident center and computer room with Internet access, activities that include a health and nutrition series, computer literacy, senior support groups, creative arts, peer counseling, tax counseling, health insurance counseling and advocacy groups.

All 23 apartments were rented within one month of completion, and 289 people already are on the waiting list. Adults eligible to rent at La Gloria must be 62 and older and were selected by lottery. Many have stories similar to Moreno's.

"I'm actually a public health nurse," said Salinas City Council member Gloria De La Rosa. "I get very



DAVID ROYAL/The Herald

Helen Menezes, 88, at center wearing helmet, attends Friday's grand opening at La Gloria Senior Apartments in Salinas. Menezes, who lives in a trailer park, said she'd heard about the complex and wanted to get on the waiting list. At right is resident Jose Urquizo, 65.

emotional when my clients come to me and say, 'I'm sleeping in my car ... I'm sleeping in a garage ... I'm living in substandard conditions.'

"A lot of people don't have any kind of family support, which is why it's so critical to support senior housing and any kind of low-income housing in our community."

The project was made possible, in part, by \$830,000 in financing provided by the City of Salinas Redevelopment Agency, said Esther L. Rubio, board chairman of CHISPA.

"La Gloria Senior Apartments was constructed on what once was a vacant lot, littered with abandoned shopping carts, garbage and

drug paraphernalia," Rubio said. "It's been transformed into a beautiful complex that also complements the city's East Market Street Beautification Plan."

Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue said the true value of developments like La Gloria is that, "They allow seniors to stay in the community where they've worked and raised their families, rather than being forced to move somewhere else because of the high cost of living.

"This is exactly why you're seeing people jump up and down on redevelopment, particularly when you're a community that repeatedly is doing exactly what it was designed to do,"

the mayor added.

The development was constructed by Central Coast Residential Builders, CHISPA's construction subsidiary, and overseen by Project Manager Paul Tran. The project used 131 suppliers and construction employees from Monterey County (99 from Salinas), which, according to Rubio, injected more than \$3 million into the local economy.

More information about La Gloria Senior Housing and the CHISPA nonprofit agency can be found online at www.chispahousing.org or by calling 757-6251.

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