



## CHISPA's 44th Annual Celebration

CHISPA hosted its annual event on February 1st, welcoming 200 community leaders to the Salinas City Center at CSUMB in Oldtown to celebrate our accomplishments of the past year. Guests enjoyed dinner provided by the Steinbeck House Restaurant. Scheid Vineyards provided our wine. Driscoll's contributed berries.

***We thank Scheid Vineyards and Driscoll's for supporting us each year and for making this event special.***

The Annual Celebration netted over \$79,000. We are grateful for everyone who sponsored the event or purchased tickets. Half of the event proceeds was split between CHISPA's three scholarships: Hartnell College scholarship, California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) scholarship, and our scholarship administered by the Community Foundation of Monterey County, which can be used at any accredited college or university. The remaining funds will fund community services offered in CHISPA apartments.

*(continued on next page)*

### WHAT'S INSIDE

**01. 44th Annual Celebration  
at a Glance**

**02. Why We Do What We Do:  
Bracero, Daniel Vargas**



These three scholarships are offered to students whose families live in CHISPA apartments or homes. This year, four students from Hartnell College received scholarships, three students from CSUMB received scholarships, and two students received the CHISPA scholarship administered by the Community Foundation.

CHISPA honored our community Partner of the year: Point Lobos Foundation. CHISPA and Point Lobos Foundation have partnered over

the past 18 months to provide opportunities for CHISPA families to visit the Point Lobos State Natural Reserve. Families from CHISPA's apartments in South County, Salinas, and North County are invited to come explore the beauty of the coast through guided walks to explore beaches, tidepools, and forest trails.

Point Lobos volunteer docents provide the participants with hands-on educational presentations before they visit Point Lobos. Transportation to the coast and picnic lunches are provided. In addition, the families are invited to return at no cost and are provided with gas cards to cover transportation costs.

A highlight of the event was a speech by Daisy Rivera, a former participant in the Castroville Teen Leadership program and a current student at Stanford. The Rivera family is one of the new residents at CHISPA's recently completed Alfred Diaz-Infante Apartments.



CHISPA staff also thanked Norm Kolpin for his years of leadership at CHISPA and named a new scholarship after Mr. Kolpin. The event concluded with CHISPA's new President and CEO Geoffrey Morgan, giving closing comments.

***It was such a pleasure to see everyone who attended, and we appreciate all who made this event possible.***







## Why We Do What We Do: Bracero, Daniel Vargas

I introduced myself as CHISPA's new CEO to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors on September 12, 2023, the week of the 60th anniversary of the death of 57 Bracero farmworkers in Chualar. The farmworkers were on a bus headed back to where they lived, the Earl Meyers Company Labor Camp in Salinas. In September 2023, Monterey County was honoring the tragic death and the sacrifice and work of these Braceros. These Braceros first came to the US from Mexico in 1942 while American farmworkers were trading plowshares in for swords to help win World War II. The Braceros not only supported the war effort with their work, but they also helped to make the Salinas Valley one of the most productive agricultural regions. The Salinas Valley continued to maintain its position in world agriculture from 1942 until the end of the Bracero program shortly after the tragedy at Chualar. On the same day I met with the supervisors, the board

honored this group of men who still live in Monterey County, with long overdue recognition. Some are over 100 years old..

After I finished my public introduction and the recognition ceremony was over, I got a tap on the shoulder from Tony Vargas. He let me know he and his father, Daniel Vargas, lived in a CHISPA home in Gonzales with his mother and one other sibling, a home they built with CHISPA via the USDA Self Help Housing Program. Daniel brought his family from Zinápapo, in the state of Michoacán, Mexico after first coming to work as a Bracero in 1955. Daniel knows how blessed he was, first to be granted citizenship to stay in the US, and second, to be a part of a lucky few farmworker families who worked on each other's houses alongside CHISPA contractors in the Canyon Creek Community.



*Daniel on the right - 1955*

Daniel raised young Tony in this home. Tony began his studies at UC Santa Barbara. As the youngest of eight siblings, Tony's return home during the summer of 2013 coincided with his father's health challenges, including atrial fibrillation. Tony took on the responsibility of supporting his family, pausing his studies to work as a chef and provide assistance to his parents. While caring for his father, he also supported his mother, who managed Type 2 diabetes. Stanford doctors said Daniel's condition developed from latent tuberculosis that became active, perhaps from his time in crowded farmworker barracks as a Bracero. Daniel utilized his experience as a Bracero to help his family grow healthy food from gardens on their own land. Tony used his work experience as a chef combined with his studies to establish good eating habits which helped to reverse the effects of severe diabetes and other health conditions caused by processed food. This created a healthy lifestyle for the Vargas family. Tony worked as a chef at kitchens for seven





years while he started a family, and completed his education online through Arizona State University's Bachelor's degree in Health Education and Health Promotion program during COVID.

After his daughter was born in 2019, Tony completed his degree and began working at Blue Zones Project Monterey County. He has continued his journey of service in promoting and living the Blue Zones mission to "empower everyone, everywhere to live better, longer."

The Vargas home was a safe place to help the family help themselves by maintaining better health. They were a part of a safe, stable neighborhood which was a launching pad to enable Tony and his family to continue the Vargas legacy of great service. The Vargas story illustrates why I love CHISPA. We build neighborhoods. The need for safe healthy neighborhoods and their impact on communities is greater than ever.



*Braceros, Domingo Ulloa, 1960 National Gallery*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Pfianna Cline**  
*Chair*

**Adoracion (Doris) Lopez**  
*Vice Chair*

**Jose A. Garcia**  
*Secretary*

**Hugo Alameda**  
*Treasurer*

Jose Chavez

Anna Mae Gazo

Mirco Jonathan Haag

Sonia Jaramillo

Sabino Lopez

Arisbeth Zepeda

## CONTACT US

295 Main Street, Suite 100

Salinas, California 93901

[www.chispahousing.org](http://www.chispahousing.org)

Chispa Housing

**Tel:** 831.757.6251

**TDD:** 831.758.9481

**Fax:** 831.757.7537