



# Bulletin

Community Building with Attorney Resources • April 2002

## Faces of C-BAR: Rafael Torres, Executive Director of the Azteca Economic Development and Preservation Corporation

*Third in a series of articles profiling the people reached by Texas C-BAR*

**Rafael Torres** grew up in Laredo, Texas. His family has lived there since the late 1800s so his roots in Laredo are long and deep, and he is committed to making it a place where all families live in healthy neighborhoods. Rafael began imagining a different Laredo after graduating from college and joining the Teacher Corps. Assigned to an elementary school in Crystal City, Texas, he



*Rafael Torres Executive Director of Azteca Economic Development and Preservation Corporation*

worked with the school's community newspaper and learned about the issues the school-children's families were facing: lack of jobs, educational opportunities, and affordable housing. Today, 25 years later, Rafael is the Executive Director of **Azteca Economic Development and Preservation Corporation** (AEDPC) in Laredo. "Unfortunately the issues in South Texas remain largely the same," Rafael reports, "but now we understand that they are connected. It's not just housing, jobs or education that is the problem; you have to work on all of these to build a healthy community."

After returning to Laredo from the Teacher Corps, Rafael became an organizer in the Azteca neighborhood, just a few of miles from downtown. He was hired because the city, without consulting the community, had planned to raze the entire neighborhood in order to build a convention center and housing development. Over the next few years, the neighborhood dug in and fought back, preventing the displacement of its predominantly low-income families. Out of

*Continued on page 3.*

## 2002 Legal Workshop Series

After seeing dozens of C-BAR clients face the same recurring legal issues, Texas C-BAR is partnering with several other entities to offer a series of important legal workshops for community development corporations and other community-based nonprofits. "We plan to equip our clients with basic legal information so they can better avoid common legal pitfalls," says **Heather K. Way**, the director of Texas C-BAR. C-BAR's 2002 workshop series, which is underwritten in part by **Wells Fargo**, will educate staff from over 100 Texas nonprofits on common legal issues critical to running a successful nonprofit. While the workshops are targeted towards C-BAR's nonprofit clients, attorneys are also more than welcome to attend. For more information about any of these workshops, please visit C-BAR's website, [www.texas-cbar.org](http://www.texas-cbar.org). Special thanks to Wells Fargo for helping make these legal workshops possible. 🏠

*See list of workshops on page 3.*

# Snapshot



*“Yet, while some only see a blighted neighborhood, the Re-Ward Third Ward Community Development Corporation sees opportunity for change.”*

**Nonprofit:** Re-Ward Third Ward Community Development Corporation

**Attorneys:** Scott Miller and Jeff Polich, Bracewell & Patterson  
Sarah McLean, Thompson & Knight

With a quick drive from downtown Houston through the North Third Ward neighborhood, it is easy to see the challenges facing the **Re-Ward Third Ward Community Development Corporation** (“Re-Ward”). The neighborhood, which is not even a mile southeast of downtown Houston, is plagued by deteriorated housing conditions and dozens of vacant and trash-strewn lots, almost all of which have clouded title. Even though the neighborhood is filled predominantly with single-family houses built during the 1920s, 30s and 40s, very few of the families own the homes they live in. Crime and the perception of crime are also major contributors to the downward spiral of the neighborhood. As a result, despite the fact that there is so much vacant land, less than two percent of the homes in the neighborhood have been built since 1980.

Yet, while some only see a blighted neighborhood, the Re-Ward Third Ward Community Development Corporation sees opportunity for change. Founded in 1995 by the leaders of the Greater Zion Missionary Baptist Church based in the community, Re-Ward buys vacant lots and turns them into single-family houses for first-time homeowners. In 2002, Re-Ward plans to build at least 10 new homes for low-income families and acquire at least 15 lots for future construction. With these ambitious plans, a limited budget, and just two staff members, Re-Ward has benefited tremendously from being able to access free legal services through Texas C-BAR.

Several different attorneys have represented Re-Ward through Texas C-BAR. **Sarah McLean**, an attorney with **Thompson Knight**, drafted a personnel policy manual for the nonprofit last year, which will help the nonprofit stay out of legal trouble as the nonprofit expands its staff. The law firm of **Bracewell & Patterson** is currently serving as Community Counsel partner for Re-Ward, representing the nonprofit in important real estate negotiations, drafting contracts with builders, and putting together land acquisition contracts. **Rosemary Washington** is the executive director for Re-Ward: “The Texas C-BAR attorneys have all helped us with projects which are so necessary for the neighborhood. Before working through Texas C-BAR, I recall how desperate we were to get legal help on doing business as a nonprofit. Even something as simple as a personnel policy manual will help protect us from liability. Because we could not otherwise afford a lawyer, we could not have put this in place without Texas C-BAR.”

In tackling the revitalization of the North Third Ward, the nonprofit no doubt has many more challenges ahead, but as you drive through the neighborhood, you can already see Re-Ward’s positive impact: six dilapidated lots have been transformed into six new homes, the crime rates are beginning to go down, and thanks to Re-Ward, dozens of additional lower income families can now look forward to the opportunity to own their first home. 🏠

Continued from *Faces of C-BAR*.

this struggle, AEDPC was born in 1982, and Rafael agreed to be its director.

Since then, AEDPC, a community-based nonprofit, has grown considerably under Rafael's watch and has brought about remarkable changes to the community. Among its many achievements, AEDPC is currently building 50 units of multifamily housing. The nonprofit is also constructing scattered infill houses for low-income families and will be setting up a subsidiary corporation, with Texas C-BAR's help, so that AEDPC can partner with the city on building the homes. In addition to working with the city, another new and promising partnership for AEDPC has been formed with **Conoco Corporation**, whose attorneys are serving as general counsel for the nonprofit as part of Texas C-BAR's **Community Counsel Partnership** initiative. Conoco attorneys will provide AEDPC on-going legal assistance over the next year on a wide array of business law matters, including helping the nonprofit spot important legal issues before it becomes too late to address them.

Now, after 10 years of leading AEDPC, Rafael has a deep sense of satisfaction when he walks the Azteca neighborhood. He sees a community, once slated by the city for the wrecking ball, now working with the city and other partners to build a better future for the Azteca neighborhood families. 🏡



## Upcoming Workshops for Nonprofits

### **CDC 101: How to Start a CDC**

May 14, *McAllen*

Sponsored by the Texas Association of CDCs

### **CDC 101: How to Start a CDC**

June 5, 2002, 9 am-noon, *Fort Worth*

Sponsored by the Texas Association of CDCs

### **Legal Maintenance for Nonprofits**

June 5, 2002, noon-1 pm, *Fort Worth*

Co-sponsored with the City of Fort Worth

### **Employment Law for Nonprofits**

June 12, 2002, *Houston*

Co-Sponsored with LISC

### **Business Ventures for Non Profit Organizations: Joint Ventures, Partnerships, and For-Profit Subsidiaries**

July 18, 2002, *Dallas*

Co-Sponsored with Enterprise Foundation

### **Employment Law for Nonprofits**

July 23, 2002, *Mission*

Co-Sponsored with the Coalition for Valley Families

For more information about these workshops, log onto [www.texasbar.org](http://www.texasbar.org).

# Texas C-BAR Welcomes New and Returning Attorney Volunteers

(December 1, 2001 to April 1, 2002)

Roger Bartlett

Matt Baskind—*Vinson & Elkins*

Cynthia Bast—*Locke Liddell & Sapp*

Cliff Blount—*Thompson, Coe, Cousins & Irons*

Pat Breeland—*Vinson & Elkins*

John Broude—*Broude, Smith & Jennings*

Gary Brown—*Conoco Corporation*

Lynn Carter

Erin Dempsey—*Locke Liddell & Sapp*

Lisa Dilorio—*Baker Botts*

Terry Folkas—*Brobeck Phleger & Harrison*

Jim Gordon—*Winstead Sechrest & Minick*

Nancy Hagquist—*Winstead Sechrest & Minick*

Chad King—*Hughes & Luce*

Bob Ladd—*Haynes & Boone*

Bryce Linsenmayer—*Haynes & Boone*

Sarah McLean—*Thompson & Knight*

Faith McManus—*Baker Botts*

Bridgette McNulty—*Jackson Walker*

Bruce Merwin—*Haynes and Boone*

Scott Miller—*Bracewell & Patterson*

Mark Mouritsen—*Dell Corporation*

William Murphy—*Vinson & Elkins*

Michael Newman—*Gardere Wynne Sewell*

Melissa Plumlee—*Baker Botts*

Jeff Polich—*Bracewell & Patterson*

Debbie Ramirez—*Vinson & Elkins*

Charlotte Rasche—*Bracewell & Patterson*

JoAnna Rush—*Baker Botts*

Consuella Simmons—*Baker Botts*

Justin Switzer—*Haynes and Boone*

James Thompson—*Vinson & Elkins*

Annette Tripp—*Locke Liddell & Sapp*

Shannon Turner—*Vinson & Elkins*

Marc Viscuso—*Gardere Wynne Sewell*

Dathan Voelter—*Vinson & Elkins*

Justin Warf—*Baker Botts*

Gail Weatherby—*Vinson & Elkins*

Rebecca Williams—*Baker Botts*

Elizabeth Wright—*Bracewell & Patterson*

William Wright—*Thompson & Knight*

Becky Yates—*Dell Corporation*

## About Texas C-Bar

Texas Community Building with Attorney Resources (Texas C-BAR) is a statewide business law pro bono project which provides community-based nonprofits with the legal tools they need to succeed in transforming distressed neighborhoods into healthy communities. Texas C-BAR was founded in 2000 as a special project of Legal Aid of Central Texas. Texas C-BAR currently partners with more than 20 of the state's largest law firms and corporations to help nonprofits build communities and ultimately better the lives of thousands of low-income families throughout the state. For more information about Texas C-BAR, or to participate in our pro bono program, please contact the staff of Texas C-BAR at:


phone: 512/447-7707, ext. 370

fax: 512/447-3940

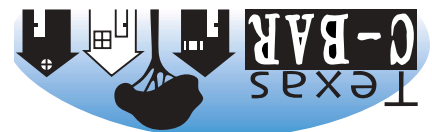
email: [txcbar@lact.org](mailto:txcbar@lact.org)

web: [www.texascbar.org](http://www.texascbar.org)

## Special Thanks to C-BAR's Newest Supporters

Texas C-BAR welcomes **The Meadows Foundation** and **Washington Mutual Bank** to the C-BAR Founders' Circle of supporters. The Meadows Foundation, established in 1948 for the benefit of the people of Texas, has made a three-year commitment to Texas C-BAR with a \$60,000 grant to support the expansion of C-BAR's work in urban areas. The Meadows Foundation is nationally recognized for its investment in innovative and imaginative ways to solve community problems, and C-BAR is proud to be among its select group of grantees. C-BAR is also pleased to announce that Washington Mutual Bank has awarded \$25,000 for C-BAR's new economic development initiative. The Washington Mutual funding will expand C-BAR's outreach to community-based nonprofits working to revitalize economic opportunity in low-income communities through programs which include job training, revolving loan funds, and micro-enterprise development. To these and all of our supporters, we say "Thank you!" 

“Thank  
you!”



Legal Aid of Central Texas  
2201 Post Road, Suite 104  
Austin, Texas 78704  
phone: 512/447-7707, ext. 370  
fax: 512/447-3940  
email: [txcbar@lact.org](mailto:txcbar@lact.org)  
web: [www.texascbar.org](http://www.texascbar.org)

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Austin, Texas  
Permit No. 2837