



Senator Eliot Shapleigh

District 29

El Paso Press Release

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For Immediate Release

May 18, 2009

CNN HERO AWARD FINALIST MARIA RUIZ HONORED WITH SENATE AND HOUSE RESOLUTIONS

"Maria Ruiz's story is an amazing lesson of service, sacrifice and dedication to others. She has inspired many people."

AUSTIN - Today, Senator Eliot Shapleigh (D-El Paso) and Representative Marisa Marquez (D-District 77, El Paso) honored El Pasoan Maria Ruiz with special resolutions on the floors of the Texas Senate and House. In 2008, Ruiz was a finalist for the CNN Hero award and was honored this year by ABC's "Extreme Home Makeover: Home Edition."

For the last 13 years, Ruiz has sacrificed her time and resources to help provide for more than 12,000 children and their families in the most impoverished areas of Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Many of these families are living in homes that lack such basic resources as electricity and running water.

Ruiz and her husband, Jesus, founded [JEM Ministries](#) in 1996 to collect donations of food, toys, clothes, and other items for distribution to the area's needy children. The couple work several jobs just to be able to support their philanthropy.

Currently, Mrs. Ruiz is working to help build a community kitchen and orphanage in Juarez which will feed 500 children daily and house 100 children.

"Maria Ruiz's story is an amazing lesson of service, sacrifice and dedication to others. She has inspired many people," Senator Shapleigh said.

Marquez exclaimed, "Maria Ruiz is an incredible woman. Every community should be so lucky to have a family so committed to improving the lives of others. In our fast paced world, the level of compassion Maria and her husband have shown is both rare and remarkable."

Maria Ruiz was named a [finalist for CNN's Hero](#) of the Year Award and was honored on national TV in November 2008. She used her prize money from the award to help with the costs of constructing the ministry's new orphanage.

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This year, the Ruiz family was also selected by ABC's "[Extreme Home Makeover: Home Edition](#)" to have her home completely remodeled. Since the remodeling, the Ruiz family have opened their home for her fellow El Pasoans to view and collected food donations as their only price of admission.

Today, Maria and Jesus, and their children, Elizabeth and Jesus Jr., met with state lawmakers after being honored with special resolutions in both chambers.

Video of the Ruiz family being honored in the Senate and House may be found [here](#) and [here](#), respectively .

To get involved with or donate to JEM Ministries, please visit the ministry's Web site, www.jemministriesep.org.

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