

CSA honors this year's 'Hometown Heroes'

MARY LOU DE NATALE,
EL CAMINO HOSPITAL
HAILED FOR THEIR
GOOD WORKS

By Kelsey Mesher

Mountain View, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills community members joined together last Friday morning to honor the Community Services Agency's Hometown Heroes for 2009, Mary Lou De Natale and El Camino Hospital.

CSA, which provides social services for the poor, homeless and elderly, presents its Hometown Heroes award annually to individuals and organizations that have made significant impacts on the community in the last year.

"You are the community safety net," CSA associate director Maureen Wadiak told attendees, who included school board members and administrators, hospital executives, city officials and members of the public. "The safety net is needed now more than ever."

De Natale — an associate professor in community and psychiatric nursing at University of San Francisco — has worked for more than a decade coordinating the student nursing intern program at CSA. Tom Myers, the nonprofit's executive director, called her work "a beautiful collaboration between social work and nursing" that has helped seniors.

"Every moment is a choice," De Natale told the audience, explaining how she learned that lesson from years of giving flu shots, assisting on doctor's visits and helping to train student nurses to serve populations "that can have no choices."

"I appreciate the opportunity to be part of the community that supports CSA," she said. "I'm just one of the many that serve that population — it is indeed an honor."

Ken Graham, CEO of El

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COURTESY PHOTO

Jose Vargas with Mary Lou De Natale.

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Camino Hospital, accepted the Hometown Heroes award on behalf of the organization. Myers thanked the hospital for a \$100,000 grant given last year,

and for “improving the lives of our parents and grandparents and all the seniors in our community.”

“I feel a little bit out of my league,” said guest speaker Jose Vargas, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Mountain View High School graduate, to the audience of “generous people.”

“To me, there’s no greater measure of humanity” than generosity, he said.

In his talk, Vargas referenced the late Ted Kennedy, who “always saw what the Bible calls the ‘least amongst us.’”

Vargas recalled Kennedy’s 1980 speech at the Democratic National Convention: “Programs may become obsolete, but the ideal of fairness always endures. ... The poor may be out of political fashion, but they are not without human needs.”

“Somehow we have to see ourselves in each other,” Vargas said.

He recalled a bus trip he took as a young reporter for the *Washington Post* from Dupont Circle to Anacostia, when he first witnessed the “other” Washington, D.C.

“I was so struck by so much powerlessness in such a powerful city,” he said. That’s why he took such a particular interest in the Internet: “It allowed everyday people to take part in the political process.”

“We are part of a community,” Vargas said in his closing remarks. We need “to see the people that are least amongst us as a part of it too.” ■

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