



**JONES AGENCY**  
marketing advertising public relations

Contact: Nadia Villagrán  
Director of Communication  
Coachella Valley Housing Council  
760-347-3157  
760-641-3307 cell phone  
Nadia.villagran@CVHC.org

Contact: Kristy Kneiding  
760-325-1437 x245  
kristy@jonesagency.com

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**IS THE AMERICAN DREAM ALIVE AND WELL IN THE DESERT?**

*With the help of local non-profits and supportive families,  
two local students prove that it is.*



**Indio, CA (July 10, 2013)** –Is the American Dream still alive and well here in the Southern California desert? Can children from low-income families have the chance to improve their circumstances and break the cycle of poverty through hard work and dedication? The answer is an emphatic yes, with the help of local non-profits, supportive families and a willing spirit.

Brawley native Carolina Godoy is proof that the American dream is active and obtainable. Carolina graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Public Administration from San Diego State University this May.

Carolina started life in a small apartment with her parents and older brother. Her father worked as a groundskeeper and it was hard to imagine being able to afford a home of their own. “I was 15 years old when the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition (CVHC) helped my family through their Mutual Self-Help program,” she recalls. CVHC’s Mutual Self-Help program is designed to assist families by providing them the opportunity to build their own homes. The “sweat equity” they earn while building their home is used as the down payment on that home. Carolina remembers how different it

was living in a house with more space and freedom, “I was too little to help much with the building process, but when we moved in I was excited about finally being able to paint the walls and decorate my own room.”

When Carolina decided to attend San Diego State University, CVHC offered a helping hand once more. “They gave me a scholarship through the John F. Mealey Scholarship Fund my senior year of high school—the money helped pay for my books and the public transportation I used to get to and from school.” Carolina hopes to continue on with her studies. She is currently working to earn money toward achieving a master’s degree and eventually wishes to pursue a career in social work.

Her graduation is a source of pride, she says, because Carolina is the first in her family to graduate from a university. “My parents supported me as much as they could in my studies. They were always there to encourage me to keep going,” she says.

Carolina has no shortage of role models in her success. One such leader is 2012 UC Berkeley graduate and aspiring urban planner Juan Rodriguez. Juan grew up in CVHC housing as well, and returned to CVHC after graduation – this time with his architecture and urban planning degrees – to work as an intern for CVHC. “My goal is to help the community by working for an organization like CVHC that plans and builds quality low-cost housing,” he remarks.

Another inspiration is Agxibel Barajas of Coachella, who also grew up in CVHC’s housing and went to college with a John F. Mealey Scholarship. This 2007 USC graduate majored in Business Administration and Finance and earned a law degree from the University of Arizona in 2012. She is excited to come back and use her legal knowledge toward setting up a non-profit law foundation in her hometown.

“I remember how important education has always been to my parents,” recalls Barajas. “They wanted us to have a home where we could be in the same school, have our own rooms, be able to study and grow up with choices,” she comments as she remembers her childhood.

Is the American Dream alive and well here? Just ask Carolina, Juan, and Agxibel, whose parents’ own American Dream of homeownership and belief in the power of education sparked their children’s dreams and enabled them to excel beyond all expectations.

####

Located in Indio, California, about one hundred miles east of Los Angeles, the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition (CVHC) is an award-winning non-profit housing development corporation dedicated to helping low and very-low income families improve their living conditions through advocacy, research, construction, and operation of housing and community development projects. CVHC is celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year providing affordable housing and community development programs to hundreds of underserved families. To date, CVHC has built more than 4,000 homes and apartments for low-income households in Riverside and Imperial counties. In addition, CVHC has developed childcare centers, after-school programs, and medical clinics. It operates various services for its tenants and others including mariachi classes, English as a Second Language and computer classes, a ballet folklorico program, and tennis and recreational programs. For more information visit [www.cvhc.org](http://www.cvhc.org)



Building Communities.  
Fulfilling Dreams.  
30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY