

Su Teatro says thank you to Elyria by Tony Garcia

Su Teatro would like to offer our sincerest gratitude and thanks to the neighborhood of Elyria for serving as our home for these past 21 years, as we approach the time when we will relocate to the Denver Civic Theatre, the transition will be bittersweet. When we were looking for a home Elyria, a tiny neighborhood, overlooked and under appreciated embraced Su Teatro with open arms. Neighbors such as Angelica Martinez (living next door) offered support and accommodation, Jerry Lawson (owner of Artes del Pueblo gallery) planned events and encouraged the artists to participate in the neighborhood. Hector who lives behind our building, along with his family kept watch over the space, reporting and even investigating any suspicious behavior. In fact Hector nearly gave me a heart attack as he noticed the door was open at 2AM, he walked into my office to ask me if everything was alright. After he pulled me off the ceiling, I explained that I was working and had lost track of time. He suggested in the future I lock the door, and for the next few nights came by to make sure I did.

With our neighbors we fought together to make ASARCO Foundry accountable, to stop the Bio-Medical Waste incinerator from coming into the neighborhood and resisted any I-70 highway expansion. Su Teatro worked to keep the grounds maintained because we knew the neighbors don't tolerate eyesores. Elyria is a proud neighborhood, Mr. Andrew Kelley, labor leader and city council member, who lived next door to me, taught me that, he schooled me on Elyria history, corrected me when he felt I needed adjustment, and went before City Council to support our CDBG grant, telling them to "give Su Teatro what they want". We celebrated the new Valdez-Perry library, and the artists and actors were able to interact with the children in activities for the Day of the Dead, and Cesar Chavez Day. We are grateful for those opportunities. We are grateful to the people who stop by and say they went to school here, and just want to walk through the building. We are grateful to former neighborhood actors like Marcos and Mayra, who stop in to give us updates on their lives and their new families. We are thankful for the patience that the neighbors have exhibited, as we grew it became clearer that Elyria wanted to return to a neighborhood, and Su Teatro's growth was pushing against the neighborhood's quiet. It was time for us, Su Teatro to leave. Sadly, but better for all.

True to our commitment, Su Teatro sought to leave behind that which would provide a positive community use. The Odyssey Family Residences will provide homes for female U.S. veterans in transition from the military back to civilian life. The renovated facility will provide the neighborhood opportunities for among other things, a neighborhood meetings space with kitchenette, WiFi cyber cafe, satellite health clinic, afterschool programs and English language and citizenship classes. The biggest asset will be the women themselves, it is estimated that 15% of the military returning from Iraq and Afghanistan will be women, and a large number will be Latinas. They are like the Adelitas, who fought in the Mexican Revolution, returning from the battle field, some are wounded, but are coming home to heal, and get stronger, so that they can continue to contribute to our country. They will be voices and minds and passions that can help Elyria. They are young and smart and committed, they have families, and they are our daughters. What they have done no one has done before them, they are the first generation of women to see such extensive combat, and what they are capable of doing will be greater than any one before us. As they heal, we will get stronger, and this is the kind of passion and power we need in Elyria.

Hopefully they will fall in love with this quiet little neighborhood the same as we have. It where I have lived for 28 years. Where I own my home , where I raised my daughter and I where I know my neighbors. The parallels between Elyria and the old Westside neighborhood where I grew up are great, the isolations in the middle of the city pitted against a strong will to survive and persevere, but also a strong sense of family. There were kids who played and rode their bikes in front of the Centro, intermingling with our patrons as we prepare for the show, and another group

of kids with laptops sitting on our bench painted to look like the United Farm worker's flag siphoning off our internet signal. It was all I ever hoped for, and more.

Su Teatro leaves Elyria hopeful and thankful. I will still be here, and so will many of the neighborhoods issues, but the addition of the Odyssey Family Residences will serve as a new foundation for improving and honoring Elyria, and her history. The Elyria Elementary School building will be the only edifice that bears the name of the once independent township of Elyria, and its name and memory will continue to a new generation of beneficiaries and proponents.