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SALSA Receives Prestigious Mader Award

SAN ANTONIO, TX (November 1, 2006) – Like salsa the dance, SALSA (Serving and Learning in San Antonio) the San Antonio-based non-profit volunteer program, brings people together. And like salsa the food, which accompanies so many meals and snacks, SALSA makes life better.

On Saturday, November 11, 2006, Catholic Network of Volunteer Service (CNVS) presented the Father George Mader Award, to SALSA in honor of their work in promoting faith-based volunteerism in the San Antonio community.

SALSA is affiliated with the Mennonite Church USA and welcomes church groups of all denominations from across the United States and Canada to San Antonio where they participate in service and learning. Hugo Saucedo is the Director of SALSA. In receiving the award, Saucedo reflected upon his 15 years as part of SALSA and hoped that in 15 years his newborn son would also be serving with SALSA as well.

For the service component, SALSA partners with local helping agencies including homeless shelters, food pantries, and community outreach organizations. As part its learning component, SALSA also brings in speakers to share with groups about issues like immigration, economic and social policy, and poverty that affect the San Antonio community.

Each year, approximately 50 groups of 35-40 people from across the country come to San Antonio to work with SALSA. While many of the groups are composed mainly of young people, SALSA is open to people of all ages who want to serve the poor and needy.

One organization that has worked with SALSA, is San Antonio Alternative Housing Corporation (SAAHC). Ruth Polston, Director of SAAHC's Repair and Modification Program (RAMP) has hosted between 8-15 church groups per year in the nine years she's been with SAAHC. Of SALSA's work, she notes, "Not only do people come to serve, they learn what serving is about." Ruth continues, "Their work makes San Antonio a better place."

Richard Tharp, a youth group advisor for North Hampton United Church of Christ in North Hampton, New Hampshire has worked with SALSA for the past six years. He "couldn't imagine SALSA being more helpful."

Jim Lindsay, Executive Director of CNVS, said "In placing volunteers to serve the poor in San Antonio, SALSA makes San Antonio a better place."

The Mader Award has been presented annually for the past 17 years. The Mader Award is named in honor of Fr. George Mader, co-founder of CNVS. Each year at its National Conference, CNVS presents the Mader Award to an organization or individual that promotes and advances faith-based volunteer service. Previous recipients include: Sr. Mary Rose McGeady, former Executive Director, Covenant House, NY; Senator Harris Wofford, former U.S.

Senator from Pennsylvania and former Director of the Corporation for National and Community Service; and the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities.

Established in 1963, Catholic Network of Volunteer Service is the premier non-profit association of more than 200 domestic and international volunteer and lay mission programs. There are currently more than 10,000 volunteers and lay missionaries serving in its member programs throughout the U.S. and in 108 countries worldwide.