



# 17th Annual Willie Velasquez Hispanic Excellence Award Gala



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The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Willie Velasquez Hispanic Excellence Award Gala took place on September 14, 2007 at the Omni Houston Hotel in Houston, TX. The spectacular event was an enchanting evening that began with an impressive Silent Auction and jovial reception. The room was filled with prominent community leaders, notable business partners and many distinguished individuals. The RYSS JROTC cadets launched the program by presenting the colors and leading us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Community Affairs Director, Marcello Marini of Telemondo Houston was the emcee for the evening. As the guests were dining on a delicious meal the RYSS Youth Group Dancers and RYSS Drum Line gave an outstanding performance. The banquet room was filled with excitement as the students presented an entertaining and electrifying show. Soon afterwards all attention was on the guest speaker of the night, Richard Celli, Director of Housing and Community for the City of Houston. Richard Celli with his impressive background and extensive community and civic participation was selected by Mayor Bill White in February of 2007 for his position.

As the night continued President & CEO of Tejano Center for Community Concerns, Richard Farias addressed the audience discussing the state of TCCC and recognized the generous sponsors for the night. He gave a heartwarming speech before Board Chair, Karen Becerra joined him on stage as she presented the Olga Solis Award to Judge Armando Rodriguez and the Lifetime Achievement Award to Carmen Orta. These three individuals are acknowledged for their exceptional contribution to our community. The audience listened closely as the recipients each spoke. The announcement of the evening was about to take place as the recipients of the Willie Velasquez Hispanic Excellence Awards were about to be acknowledged. Each of these individuals has been an admirable contribution to our community through education, health, community and business. And the winners are; for education- **Dr. Tatcho Mindiola Jr.** of the University of Houston, for Health – **Dr. Marcos Calderon**, for Community – **Gloria Alvarez** and for business- **Massey Villarreal** of Precision Group.

What a great honor to see such leadership and people with passion standing on stage. Accepting for Massey Villarreal was his daughter Vanessa Villarreal, and accepting for Tatcho Mindiola was a colleague Luis Salinas. The night continued to be filled with delight as the crowd made its way to the dance that followed the ceremony where Mango Punch entertained the guest.