

NEWS RELEASE

MERCI

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For Immediate Release

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MERCI HOSTS THE 28TH ANNUAL TREES OF ENCHANTMENT AND RETIREMENT FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MARTA ESCAÑUELAS AT ALMANSOR COURT

Monterey Park, CA—Sunday, December 3, 2017 MERCI will host its 28th annual “Trees of Enchantment” fundraiser at Almansor Court – Lake View Room, 700 S. Almansor Street, Alhambra. This will also be a retirement celebration for Marta Escañuelas, who has served as the Executive Director of MERCI for more than 20 years and been in the human services professions for 40 years. The champagne brunch starts at 11:00 a.m. Tickets are \$65 each or \$45 for children 5-12, if purchased in advance. Children under the age of 5 eat free. Tickets can be purchased online at <https://merci.givezooks.com/events/28th-annual-trees-of-enchantment-brunch>. Tickets purchased at the door are \$75 each or \$55 for children 5-12.

Escañuelas has been the Executive Director of MERCI since 2004 returning to the position after three years working for the San Gabriel Schools. In her position at MERCI

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she led the building project which built a new group home for six adults called “John and Mary Duce Centre,” a new Administration Building and a new Multipurpose Building. The project started with the City of Monterey Park awarding \$829,000 in HUD funds for part of the cost of the project. She went on to work with Genesis, LA and the Non-profit Finance Fund and other agencies to provide the needed loan funds to complete the buildings and with donors and foundations to help fund the projects. To complete the buildings, she worked with the architect and the contractor over a period of more than ten years. These buildings make a wonderful addition to Monterey Park and for adults with developmental disabilities.

Escañuelas is a past President of Monterey Park Rotary and current President of East Los Angeles-Montebello Business and Professional Women (BPW). Escañuelas served on the Mt. Baldy Community Association, has been the Chair of the Mt. Baldy Run to the Top, has written grants for thousands of dollars to benefit the community and foster parents abandoned dogs. Former 49th District Assemblymember Mike Eng recognized her in 2008 with a women’s leadership award, former Monterey Park Mayor Benjamin “Frank” Venti in January 2009 awarded her the Mayor’s Award of Excellence, in May 2008 the American Jewish University awarded her the Mickey Weiss Alumni of the Year Award, in October 2009 the East Los Angeles-Montebello BPW awarded her their “Woman of Achievement,” in May 2011 the YWCA of the San Gabriel Valley awarded her their Woman of Achievement Award for “Promoting Freedom Through Community Service” and in 2013 Congresswoman Judy Chu selected her as a “Women of Distinction.”

This annual brunch is an exciting way to start the holiday season and to wish Escañuelas a long and happy retirement. In addition to the delicious food, there will be a boutique where attendees can purchase craft items. Attendees can purchase tickets to win one or more of the 20 beautifully decorated trees with gifts under them worth at

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least \$350. Santa Claus will also be attending the event. Attendees can get their photo taken with the “big guy.”

A group of parents of children with developmental disabilities from the San Gabriel Valley and East Los Angeles formed MERCI in 1955 as a school because at that time there were no educational options for their children. In 1962 MERCI moved into the 525 N. Chandler Avenue site which had been built in 1919. Over the years MERCI has moved into supporting adults with day programs and adults in residential homes. MERCI presently serves 125 adults with developmental disabilities from all over the San Gabriel Valley in five programs and in two residential homes.

People who cannot attend the event can make a donation by mailing a check to MERCI, P.O. Box 676, Monterey Park, CA 91754 or via MERCI's website at <http://www.merci.org>. Donations to MERCI are tax deductible, as MERCI is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization. For more information contact Associate Directors of Program Bernice LaScala or Reyna Peña at (626) 289-8817 or E-mail them at blascala@merci.org or rpena@merci.org.

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