

McEntee Honored: Civic Center Plaza to Bear His Name

County of Santa Clara, Office of the County Executive
June 7, 2005

SAN JOSE, CALIF. – Today, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors took the unusual step to name the County's Civic Center Plaza after the late James P. McEntee, Sr., who held leadership positions in County Human Relations, from 1976 to his retirement in 2003, and was a model of human kindness and compassion. McEntee died last September leaving a legacy of advocacy for social justice.



McEntee had a long history of building bridges between communities, bringing programs and services to the people in Santa Clara County. He was a founding member of the Confederation de la Raza Unida, founding chairperson of the Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara County, a founding member of the Emergency Housing Consortium, and the Help House the Homeless Coalition.

In the late 1980s McEntee urged the county to open up its armories to temporarily house the homeless during winter, a program that has continued throughout the years. Jim, fluent in Spanish, also worked very closely with the United Farm Workers of America beginning in 1965. From 1962 to 1965, Jim served as the Executive Director of the Latin American Mission Program in San Francisco. Jim also served as Executive Director of Voluntary Action Center of Santa Clara County from 1973 to 1976.

During his tenure with the County, he served as the Director of the Human Relations Commission. He later served as Manager of the Office of Human Relations until his retirement in 2003. He was responsible for the Human Relations Commission; Citizenship & Immigration program; Dispute Resolution Program Services; Network for a Hate-Free Community; Institute for Non-Violence program, and the Youth Advisory Task Force. Jim retired in July 2003 after 27 years of service.

McEntee held a B.A., Degree in Philosophy from Saint Patrick's College Menlo Park and a Degree in Theology and a Master of Divinity Degree from Saint Patrick's Seminary. Prior to entering the world of secular public service, Jim McEntee also served as a Roman Catholic

Priest. He was associate pastor at Saint Catherine's Church in Morgan Hill and at Saint Louis Bertrand Church in Oakland.

Jim was involved in church, civic and community activities. He was married to Ann McEntee, a true partner for social justice and a teacher, and with her reared a large multi-cultural family.

In 1990, Santa Clara County Bar Association awarded Jim its Distinguished Achievement Citation – for non-lawyers who have made a significant contribution to the legal community and/or administration of justice in Santa Clara County.

The Board's decision was based on the recommendation of the Jim McEntee Legacy Community Committee (JMLCC), which held two public meetings where residents expressed their sentiments on how best to honor Jim McEntee's memory. Under consideration were proposals to rename the County Civic Center Building, the Board of Supervisors Meeting Chambers, and the County Civic Center Plaza. Those attending the public meetings, including his wife Ann, voted overwhelmingly to recommend that the Civic Center Plaza be renamed in McEntee's honor. JMLCC will raise funds for appropriate plaques and/or signage for the Plaza.

"Jim embodied the spirit of brotherhood among humanity, said Supervisor Blanca Alvarado, County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors. "A great number of the gatherings, celebrations and programs Jim led took place right here on the plaza. It is as though his spirit is already present. It is fitting that we celebrate his life by naming this plaza in his honor."