

# Jim McEntee A Hero to All

by Osvaldo Castillo  
*El Observador*

When community members in Santa Clara think of Jim McEntee, they remember a kind, warm-hearted, and caring individual, who's work has and will continue to improve the lives of those living in Santa Clara County.

On Friday, May 7, county residents and officials will pay tribute to McEntee by unveiling the James P. McEntee Plaza at the Santa Clara County Government Center.

"Jim was a wonderful person who worked hard to bring people together to solve issues peacefully," said McEntee's wife, Ann. "He loved everyone no matter who they were. Everyone was important to him."

McEntee served as Director of Human Relations for the County of Santa Clara for over 27 years. He also started food banks and worked with various religious and ethnic groups throughout the county.

"He stood for peacemaking, nonviolence and social justice, respect for diversity and all cultures, and civil and human rights for all," said Andrea Villasenor-Perry, Vice Chair of the Jim McEntee Legacy Committee. "He was a man of deep religious faith, a servant leader, passionate in his love for his family and community."

Prior to working with Santa Clara County, McEntee was a priest serving migrant farmworkers in Morgan Hill, working closely with Cesar Chávez and the UFW.

"I believe his dedication to peace and social justice came from his deep faith in God and his desire to live out gospel values. His life's work was so much more than a profession/ career - it was a ministry," Perry said. "He understood his relative position of privilege in society and knew that he was called to stand courageously as an ally, by the side of those with less power and privilege. He understood the evils of racism, classicism, homophobia, etc. and he preached a gospel of inclusion, unity, and respect for all, even and most importantly in the course of diametrically opposed community opinions and viewpoints."

The plaza dedicated to McEntee is a reminder of all the hard work that he did for the community and a reminder that the community as a whole must continue to work hard to bring justice to all.

"We desperately need reminders, especially here in Silicon Valley, of what is most important in life - not status, wealth, power, consuming - but, love for family, love and service to others, fighting for peace and justice for all. Especially at this time of economic and political recession, we need to celebrate what represents the best of what we can be as human beings," Perry said.

The Jim McEntee Legacy Committee also offers scholarships to community college students who have been accepted to four-year colleges.

"The students selected have all had to overcome difficult situations in order to make their lives better," Ann McEntee said.