

## **Mark Torres**

### **Division President**

### **Lennar Homes**

**O**ur first involvement with ADV was in 2003. We jumped in with both feet. This is a great organization providing a great service to the community.

Our first opportunity was helping to build Casa de Paz. It fit with us, because we're builders. Then it kind of dovetailed from there into one-on-one with the residents.

The holiday event in 2003 was our first one. It was really a very eye-opening event. Here at Lennar, most of us have jobs and a fairly stable environment and lives. So to be exposed to that was eye-opening for us and really helpful in opening up our hearts and understanding that things are happening outside of our sheltered lives that aren't really pretty. We learned we could help and make things better.

The first event was our holiday event at the Riverside Holiday Inn. We had the families come out and it was really nice. We gave our departments the challenge of taking a family. We set a budget and decided we would go out and provide some gifts. Each department went out and shopped for their families. That really started the connection there, because you realize that you are shopping for a child or a mother who had been through some ugly times. So I think that connection started right then and there and got followed up with wrapping the gifts and going to the event. We got to actually see the families opening the gifts and how much joy was expressed in that event just put it over the top for us. This was not just a great event for the victims at Casa de Paz, but also an opportunity for us to do more than just build homes ... to really give back to the community.

I think our associates were overwhelmed by it when we went out there. It just hit home for them. It allowed us to get more out of the holidays than we would normally get. We followed that up with various events the following year to provide improvements to the shelter. Easter egg hunts. Really keeping the connection with the residents. It's just been a great relationship since then. It's been a win win for both organizations.

During construction, it went beyond Lennar. We used the services of some of our trade partners in the field. Once the word got out to them, they jumped in and started helping. What was compelling was how easy it was to convince others to do it because it's worthwhile. It's an easy sell because it's doing something good for someone else.

Lennar has a very expansive scope of charitable work across the country. The projects that we worked on with ADV are very similar in size to others we have worked on with Habitat for Humanity in the Inland Empire. For us, more than the construction efforts, it's been the one on one. The associates have been coming up with ways to have an impact on their lives.

Recently we had a job fair at our offices. We had about



12 of the residents come in and we did mock interviews. They brought in resumes and met with various department heads who are very accustomed to interviewing prospective associates. I thought that was a great event because it required volunteers. So it was an outpouring of true, sincere desire to be involved. Those associates who were involved were very committed to it and took it very seriously. They didn't give the residents any slack. They acted like it was a real interview because to not do that would have done them a disservice. The intent was to prepare them for opportunities in the future.

Dollars aren't really the whole picture. It's really making a commitment to the organization and being there for that organization all year long.

Working with ADV as a business partner has been very rewarding. Eliza is very very motivated and determined. She really makes it easy. She works well with our teams giving us perspective on how we can best have an impact and how we can direct our resources effectively. She's passionate about her organization. It makes it easy. She has helped us understand what is appropriate and what is not.

If I were talking to colleagues in our industry about what would be the return for investment in helping others, I'd say it goes beyond one person. It permeates throughout your entire organization. It's a shot in the arm. Every time we do an event with ADV, the associates who participate are rejuvenated. They come back feeling very very good about being able to make a difference. For every dollar invested, I'd say you get a return of a thousand percent in morale ... unifying your troops.

As a business person, the impact to your morale is priceless.

In our mind, a big part of what ADV is accomplishing is the rehabilitation of families. In our mind, we feel that's a place where we can be very impactful.

People just jump at the opportunity to work with ADV.