



## Project Remember offers reduced rent to veterans

by *Jim Walsh* - May. 5, 2009 10:03 AM  
The Arizona Republic

U.S. Army veteran Chris Esquivel needed more than lip service about supporting the troops when he lost his job as a real estate agent, then lost his home to foreclosure.

Esquivel and his wife, Carmen, who have two children, needed real help right away. That's exactly what he got from Project Remember and a sympathetic executive from a management company who is a veteran himself.

Esquivel and his family moved into a brand new apartment complex in east Mesa, The District at Mountain Vista, paying about half the normal rent thanks to people who do more than just talk about helping veterans.

"If you are in need, you are in need now," Esquivel said. "I think the biggest people are being humbled these days. You never know. It could be you next."

At first, Esquivel and his family moved in with Carmen's sister. Later, they went to the Veteran's Center in Mesa for counseling. The counselor recommended Project Remember and its executive director, Vernon Bagley.

Only a day or two later, Bagley arranged for the family to move into the brand new complex and to pay \$450 a month for a year, enough time for the family to get back on its feet.

Esquivel plans to start a new job this week as a satellite dish installer for a Direct TV contractor.

Matt Summers, president of Kaplan Management of Houston, TX., is providing five apartments at half their normal rent to needy veterans through Project Remember. The program was featured during the apartment complex's recent grand opening ceremonies. Kaplan plans to extend the program to the remainder of its 10 properties, plus new properties in Dallas and Austin, he said. Summers knows what it's like to be a veteran adjusting to civilian life. He served in the Army.

"It's about doing, it's not about talking," he said. "This is our way to demonstrate our support to veterans. This is a hand up, not a handout."

Bagley said he appreciates Summers' generosity. Others also have stepped forward, including a developer who donated use of a new \$220,000 house in Buckeye.

Project Remember also has two donated units at an apartment complex near the

Advertisement

**Mother's Day**  
Bouquets \$19.99<sup>+s/h</sup>  
from 19<sup>+s/h</sup>

ProFlowers<sup>®</sup>  
Order ONLY at  
[proflowers.com/happy](http://proflowers.com/happy)  
or call 1-866-705-9141

Supplies are limited. Not valid with any other offer.

Veteran's Administration Hospital at Indian School Road and Seventh Street.

But many more units are needed as veterans return from Iraq and Afghanistan and find themselves unemployed, Bagley said. Not everyone is willing to help like Summers.

Bagley said he has been unable to arrange appointments with bankers, for instance, to see if veterans could move into foreclosed houses until they are sold.

People say they support you; then nothing happens," he said.

While a company might say it supports the troops, lower level executives might resist hiring a veteran, fearing they could lose their jobs if the veteran doesn't work, Bagley said.

Unjustified stereotypes about veterans still undermine their transition to civilian life, with decision-maker fearing, "what if he becomes a little angry, or belligerent?" Bagley said.

Retired Brigadier General Gregg Maxson, a former Arizona Army National Guard commander, said the need to help veterans has faded from the limelight as the economy became a bigger issue than the Iraq war.

"I don't think there's less support for the troops. It's just they have other things on

their minds, like the economy," he said.

But Maxson agreed with Bagley that more help for veterans is needed. While praising Summers' program, he said, "maybe you can throw down the challenge for other management groups to do the same thing."

Advertisement



**Family Value Health**  
30 Day  
FREE Product Trial

**SAVE 10 - 60%**  
ON YOUR HEALTH EXPENSES

- DENTAL DISCOUNTS
- VISION CARE DISCOUNTS
- DOCTOR & HOSPITAL DISCOUNTS
- PRESCRIPTION DISCOUNTS
- 24/7 PHYSICIAN ACCESS - TelaDoc™

[WWW.FVHCARD.COM](http://WWW.FVHCARD.COM)