

2026 Community Award Winners

Shepherd's Hand

Shepherd's Hand is dedicated to meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people experiencing homelessness and economic hardship. Since becoming an official nonprofit in 2011, Shepherd's Hand has been a steadfast force in our community. In the face of recent staff and board transitions, new leaders have assumed their roles with fresh energy and dedication. Over the past year, Shepherd's Hand has served nearly 17,000 hot meals on-site, partnered with Region 10 to deliver almost 10,000 meals to shut-ins, provided hot showers to 1,650 unshowered individuals, and helped secure housing for 18 individuals and families. In fall 2025, Shepherd's Hand assumed management of the Montrose Lighthouse, overseeing the seasonal overnight shelter for the unhoused—a significant and crucial undertaking. Their vital work is grounded in compassion, dignity, and perseverance.

In the spirit of Dr. King's call to serve "the least of these," Shepherd's Hand reminds us that justice begins with compassion—and that a beloved community is built when no one is left unseen or unheard.

Ricardo Perez, Hispanic Affairs Project

Ricardo Perez, originally from El Salvador, is the Executive Director and Co-Founder of the Hispanic Affairs Project (HAP), a nonprofit organization that has been supporting immigrant communities throughout Western Colorado for the past 20 years. Under Ricardo's leadership, HAP has promoted integration through developing crucial direct services, leadership development opportunities, and advocacy that tangibly improve the lives of immigrants. Their efforts include championing the rights of agricultural workers, advocating for local, state, and federal policies that protect immigrants, and advancing integration, safety, and inclusion through community-based programming. Ricardo's work in policy change and community engagement reflects a deep commitment to justice and empowerment, aligning with our community's core values.

In these challenging times for immigrants and refugees, HAP plays a crucial role in supporting vulnerable community members. Through advocacy, education, and courageous leadership, Ricardo Perez advances Dr. King's vision that justice, freedom, and dignity are not favors to be granted, but rights already owed to every person.

Montrose County Sheriff Posse

The Montrose County Sheriff Posse has proudly served our community for over 60 years. The Posse offers voluntary, independent support to the Montrose County Sheriff's Office in search and rescue, wildfire suppression, security, and community service. In July 2025, they worked tirelessly alongside the Sheriff's Office, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management during the South Rim Fire in the Black Canyon. With about 20 volunteers in both the east and west ends of the county, this dedicated group always comes together to get the job done. Volunteers are on call for emergencies 24/7 and provide all their own equipment. In 2024 alone, the Posse volunteered 5,522 hours. Additionally, Posse members share "Tips from the Posse" articles and guides to help people better prepare for time in the wild. Their challenge coin reads, "Until they are home, we will not rest"—a motto they truly embody.

The Posse is clearly an essential asset to our community. By placing service above self and commitment above comfort, the Montrose County Sheriff Posse exemplifies Dr. King's belief that true leadership is found in those who stand watch over their neighbors until everyone is safely home.

Rachael Zelazny, Living on a Prayer Co.

Rachael Zelazny is the Executive Director and Founder of Living on a Prayer Co., an organization dedicated to breaking the cycle of chronic homelessness, addiction, and incarceration. The organization empowers people with support, resources, and rehabilitation to help them rebuild their lives. Rachael and her team are actively fundraising and writing grants to build a 15-bed rehabilitation facility, designed to serve those who are often most difficult to treat. They anticipate breaking ground in early 2027, bringing hope and healing where it is needed most.

By facing some of our community's most complex challenges with hope and determination, Rachael Zelazny and Living on a Prayer Co. embody Dr. King's vision of redemption, restoration, and the transformative power of love in action.



MIRIAM CARDENAS
THE SHEPHERD'S HAND



RICARDO PEREZ
HISPANIC AFFAIRS PROJECT



MONTROSE COUNTY
SHERIFF POSSEE



RACHAEL ZELAZNY
LIVING ON A PRAYER CO



- OPENING CEREMONY
- AWARDS
- WALK/MARCH
- MOVIE SCREENINGS
- STUDENT ACTIVITIES
- SERVICE PROJECTS
- COMMUNITY BREAKFAST & MORE

MLK DAY
Celebration
2026
9 AM - 3 PM

JAN 19
9AM

A COMMUNITY WIDE CELEBRATION HONORING THE LEGACY OF

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

