

# Neighborhood UPDATE



OCTOBER 2023

## THE MUNICIPAL HOUSING AUTHORITY FOR THE CITY OF YONKERS

### A Letter from Carlos Laboy



We are closing Hispanic Heritage Month, and I thought about the story of two Latinos who reached for the sky.

Olga E. Custodio, Lieutenant Colonel (retired), is a former United States Air Force officer who became the first female Hispanic U.S. military pilot. She was the first Hispanic woman to complete U.S. Air Force military pilot training. Upon retiring from the military, she became the first female Hispanic commercial airline captain of American Airlines. She was born and raised in Puerto Rico, attending the University of Puerto Rico.

Olga E. Custodio is a Retired Captain from American Airlines with over 11,000 hours of flight time, having flown the Boeing 727, Fokker 100, Boeing 757 and Boeing 767 to the Caribbean, Central America, South America, Europe, Mexico Canada and U.S. Her education and professional certificates include an Air Transport Pilot certificate with single and multiengine land and instrument

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### Yonkers Housing Authority Celebrates Hispanic Artists During Heritage Month

National Hispanic Heritage Month traditionally honors the culture and contributions of both Latino and Hispanic Americans. The history and accomplishments of these groups in the shaping of the country are celebrated.

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## A Letter from Carlos Laboy

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ratings, a Flight Engineer Certificate - Turbojet Powered rating, a Radiotelephone Operator permit, FAA Medical Certificate and a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Puerto Rico. She received her commission through Officer Training School in 1980. She was the first Hispanic female to graduate from USAF Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT.) She received her fighter pilot qualification after graduating in the top 5%.

Jose Hernandez is a former astronaut—the first migrant farm worker to have traveled to space. José Hernández worked alongside his Mexican immigrant family as a young boy, picking fruits and vegetables throughout the San Joaquin Valley and into Stockton, California.

When he watched as the first astronauts walked on the moon, he knew he wanted to be just like them — an astronaut. He tried 11 times to join NASA and was rejected. However, his perseverance took him to space.

He talks about his father’s recipe for success.

- Number 1: Define your purpose in life. What are your goals?
- Number 2: Recognize how far you are from your goals.
- Number 3: Draw your road map to reach your goals.
- Number 4: Education
- Number 5: Work hard to achieve your dreams. Always give more than people ask you.

These two stories show how perseverance and hard work can take you to the sky. Two Latinos that inspire the Yonkers generation to dream. As we close Hispanic Heritage Month, let’s dream. It doesn’t matter where you start, but how you finish that matters. *El futuro lo escribes tu.*

### Carlos Laboy

Chief Operating Officer  
Municipal Housing Authority for the  
City of Yonkers



Olga E. Custodio



Jose Hernandez



## Yonkers Housing Authority Celebrates Hispanic Artists During Heritage Month

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This month we celebrate the many noted Hispanic artists we have right here in our Yonkers community. Artists like Robin Alcantara and Nancy Mendez have made an impact right here at the Yonkers Housing Authority with their artwork. Alcantara and Mendez both showed us their talent with murals painted as part of a public art project at YHA.

Robin Alcantara grew up in Yonkers and has been traveling across the country with his company Blazay NY that paints indoor and outdoor large-scale murals that are uplifting, many paying tribute to underserved communities. In Yonkers he painted the mural called the “Come Up” which was unveiled last year in the Calcagno Homes gym at 10 School Street. The mural reflects the accomplishments of African Americans from Yonkers, the centerpiece of the mural is a tribute to Ella Fitzgerald.

Alcantara also painted a tribute to essential bus drivers at the First Miles Square bus parking lot a 700 Nepperhan Avenue to thank bus drivers who bring students to and from school.

Another artist who has made an impact on YHA properties is Nancy Mendez. Mendez has left her own legacy at Curran Court with a mural of a tropical rain forest. Mendez says she draws her inspiration from her Ecuadorian and Puerto Rican heritage, her love for music, nature, and mysticism. She completed the colorful work of art on the walls of Curran Court’s community room as part of YHA’s public art project, which brought dozens of works of art to YHA properties.

Get to know some other works of art by our local Latino artists:

Jose Gonzales: [instagram.com/artbyjagonzalez](https://www.instagram.com/artbyjagonzalez)

Frances Caro: [instagram.com/thoughtswithfrankie](https://www.instagram.com/thoughtswithfrankie)

Christina De Jesus: [instagram.com/christina\\_iris\\_](https://www.instagram.com/christina_iris_)

Dan Ortiz: [instagram.com/\\_art\\_by\\_dan\\_](https://www.instagram.com/_art_by_dan_)

Luis Rivera: [instagram.com/papaaluu](https://www.instagram.com/papaaluu)



Nancy Mendez

## Community Emergency Response Team Training



Interested in learning how to prepare for a disaster and be a helping hand in emergency situations? Community Emergency Response Team training is just for you!

Classes are held Tuesdays from 7–9 p.m. at the Yonkers Police Office of Emergency Management Warehouse.

Here's a list of the remaining training sessions:

- November 6
- November 21
- December 5
- December 19
- January 2



The Community Emergency Response Team program is a course designed to teach participants how to plan for a disaster, how to respond to emergency situations and how to assist neighbors in the community in a time of emergency. Please e-mail [coyonkerscert@gmail.com](mailto:coyonkerscert@gmail.com) or call [914-377-7325](tel:914-377-7325) to enroll.

More information is available on their Facebook: [facebook.com/profile.php?id=100084503184015](https://facebook.com/profile.php?id=100084503184015)

## Free Fitness Class for Seniors

Every Thursday, personal trainer Tarsha Gibbons hosts an outdoor class to help promote health and mobility for seniors. This event at the Yonkers Public Library at 1500 Central Park Avenue is completely free and helps to benefit your everyday life.



For more information and to sign up, please scan the QR code or visit [eventbrite.com/e/enhanced-fitness-for-seniors-tickets-700277427637](https://eventbrite.com/e/enhanced-fitness-for-seniors-tickets-700277427637)

