

A MEMORIAL

HONORING THE LAS CRUCES FIRE DEPARTMENT AND THE FIREFIGHTERS
AND CREWS INVOLVED IN THE VECINO PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, the Las Cruces fire department operates a program, which serves as a lifeline to many homebound individuals with no relatives in the area, called the vecino program; and

WHEREAS, the program involves firefighters and crews making daily phone calls to check on the health and well-being of the individuals involved in the program; and

WHEREAS, the program got its start in the spring of 1995, when a call was received in fire station number one from a woman who was worried about her elderly neighbor whose light was on at 4:00 a.m.; and

WHEREAS, upon responding to the call, the firefighters discovered an elderly woman who was unconscious and had suffered serious blood loss due to an injury; and

WHEREAS, when the woman recovered from her injuries, a firefighter made a telephone call to check up on her, and that call was the beginning of the vecino program; and

WHEREAS, the program expanded as firefighters were transferred from one station to another, initiating the phone calls at their new stations; and

WHEREAS, the vecino program has served as many as

thirty-five individuals; and

WHEREAS, phone calls are made daily, three hundred sixty-five days a year, usually around 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., taking from ten to thirty minutes to complete a round of calls; and

WHEREAS, according to Robert Galaz, who has headed the vecino program for the last six years, firefighters find the phone calls rewarding and frustrating, aware that they are making an important difference in the lives of lonely people, but recognizing that the individuals' needs often far exceed the firefighters' ability to address them; and

WHEREAS, many firefighters have established personal relationships with the individuals they call, involving them in family events and visiting them at their homes; and

WHEREAS, the program was named vecino after the Spanish word for neighbor, and the firefighters and crews of the Las Cruces fire department are certainly serving as neighbors to people who otherwise would have no one to talk to on a daily basis;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the Las Cruces fire department and the firefighters and crews involved in the vecino program be honored; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to fire chief Travis Brown for distribution to all

of the firefighters and crews who participate in this valuable community service.