



In Memoriam: Gonzalo "Chalo" & Sofia Garcia

Tonight we come together on behalf of the El Paso County Democratic Party to recognize and honor the memory of two people who shared a life together for 54 years. During that time they became a monumental force on behalf of the Upper Valley and Canutillo area of our community.

This rare posthumous spotlight on Chalo and Sofia Garcia derives from the total dedication and support that they gave to each other which translated into a remarkable life of community service to an area of our community that is traditionally underserved and underappreciated.

Chalo Garcia was an exceptional athlete who left a legacy in the sports world of the upper valley. His achievements in sports were recognized when he was inducted into the El Paso Baseball Hall of Fame in 1988. He learned on the sports fields that if you play within the system and you play to win, you can accomplish great feats, and he took those lessons learned in athletics into the political arena after his playing days were over.

As his family continued to grow, he realized that there was a lack of educational opportunities for children in Canutillo and the surrounding rural communities. That spurred him to convince his farmer friends and political allies to help him establish the Canutillo School District in 1959. In 1963 Canutillo High School graduated its first senior class.

Chalo served on the Canutillo School Board for a total of ten years and last served in 2004.

Chalo was committed to a life of community service and he spearheaded numerous projects in the Canutillo area. He was a tireless advocate for the rights of the poor, he fought for everyone's right to a quality education, healthcare and clean water. Chalo never shied away from a challenge and as a result of his many endeavors on behalf of the citizens where he lived they coined him *The Godfather of Canutillo*.

In 2002 he received the Oak of Justice Award from the Catholic Diocese and the 2008 Senior Citizen of the year award by LULAC. As a further testament to Chalo and Sofia's tradition of service the school district named its baseball field after Chalo and an elementary school after both of them.

