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Foundation honors former director

Surrounded by family, board members and former scholarship recipients, Martin Martinez, former executive director of the Reynaldo J. Carreon M.D. Foundation, was honored on Friday for his 15 years of service.

Under his leadership, the foundation handed out more than \$1 million in scholarships to Latino students so they could attend college.

"He's done so much work for (youth) in the Coachella Valley," said Gloria Margarita, former KMIR 6 weekend anchor/reporter and a Carreon scholarship recipient.

Margarita replaced Martinez as executive director after he stepped down in October because of health issues.

Looking around Macario's dining room and acknowledging the success of scholarship recipients like Margarita, Martinez said he was proud.

"I think I've been doing the right thing," he said.

Martinez, an Indio resident since 1962, also helped found the Coachella Valley Mexican American Chamber of Commerce.

During the luncheon, he received plaques in recognition of his years of leadership and was thanked for being a mentor to youth in the community.

"Martin is the heart and soul of this foundation," said Pedro Rincon, a partner with the accounting firm of Peterson, Slater and Osborne, who is on the foundation board.

Dr. Carreon, a valley pioneer and philanthropist, established the foundation in his name prior to his death in 1991.

The foundation's goal is to help minorities of Mexican descent become leaders through education.

Benjamin Vasquez, 29, vice president of the California Bank & Trust Indio branch, is a Carreon scholarship recipient and board treasurer.

As one of the first members of his family to graduate high school and college, he credits the \$2,500 scholarship with helping him attend UC Riverside.

"This (scholarship) was kind of like a jump start to pursuing higher education," Vasquez said. Martinez took a very personal approach when it came to doling out scholarships. He would stay in touch with recipients long after they received their checks making sure they kept up their grades. "He kept close track of us," Vasquez said.