

THE HISPANIC HERITAGE ESSAY CONTEST

“Knockdown”

By Jose Montegudo

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Jose Montegudo, dad

How often have you noticed the design on your ceiling? The obscure detail right above your head represents what one Jacksonville man spent two decades perfecting. Jose Asencion Monteagudo-Avila is a Hispanic man in Jacksonville, Florida who owns a successful ceiling texture contracting business. He grew his company into a strong part of real-estate development while at the same time flipping gray and abandoned homes of this city into modern and affordable housing for families. But sixteen years ago, Jose moved from Mexico to Florida with little to his name to give his wife and child better lives. He worked tirelessly but making ends meet was getting harder rather than easier, sometimes only having \$50 to last his family of three the weekend. He noticed how well ceiling spraying paid and despite his lack of experience, he took his savings and sold his truck to buy the first spraying machine. He had a rough start and an especially hard time finding work given his lack of skill with texture, but eventually he improved enough to earn contracts with developers. Later, he started to work for Vatos Drywall –another Latino-owned company—finally providing a steady income. As his contracts with Vatos Drywall increased, Jose was able to hire more workers, buy more trucks, and easily order more of the machines that once took risking his entire livelihood. Jose Monteagudo plays an underappreciated role in expanding Jacksonville’s sprawling suburbia. He grows when the city is doing well. Leading a comfortable life but still devoting himself to helping people as a forgiving landlord, loaning money without interest, hiring workers just like he was, and other acts of kindness. As a successful business owner, he plays a role in the local Jacksonville economy through buying and helping to develop houses for the lucrative Jacksonville real-estate market. But as a person, Jose Monteagudo is someone who lived through adversity and uses that time to justify helping other new businesses take off. Jose Asencion Monteagudo has improved the city and individual lives with his arrival.

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