

Randolph County Courthouse, built in 1975, stands today on the bluff overlooking the river.

The buildings along the river that were part of the original town of Chester have been razed. However, a number of the old homes which stood on the bluffs above the town overlooking the river still give evidence of the wealth and the architectural style of that period. Many riverboat captains and other patrons of the river settled to this riverboat row of homes with an impressive overlook of the river.

Chester has had a rich and varied history in the development of the state of Illinois and of the nation. Illinois' first Governor, Shadrach Bond, has his resting place in Chester. Bond, who had lived in nearby Kaskaskia, was elected Governor without opposition in 1814, when Illinois was founded. Chester is also home to the Gilster Mary Lee mills and operations, producing high quality baking products for use throughout the world.

Chester also counts several historic homes as part of its heritage and culture. The Pierre Menard home is the finest example of Southern French Colonial architecture in the central part of the Mississippi river valley. Menard was a busy trader, storekeeper and politician of his period. He served as Lt. Governor under Governor Bond.

Chester is also home to one of America's most beloved cartoon characters, Popeye. Popeye's creator, Elzie Segar, was born in Chester and spent much of his youth there. When Elzie was 12 years old, he worked at the Chester Opera House and during that time he did odd jobs, played the drums with the orchestra and became the theatre's projectionist.

While films were re-wound, Popeye and many other characters were born as Elzie drew and showed them on glass slides before the local townspeople. Elize Segar and Popeye still have a place in Chester.

Chester today is a community of over 8500 people and boasts many hotels, restaurants and businesses. It continues to serve as a historic focal point for the development of southwestern and southern Illinois.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the community and people of Chester, Illinois and to recognize its role in the development of southwestern and southern Illinois.

HONORING FATHER JAVIER DE NICOLÓ

**HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, September 28, 2004*

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on my behalf and on behalf of Mr. LANE EVANS, Mr. SAM FARR, Mr. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, Mr. GERALD KLECZKA, Ms. BARBARA LEE, Mr. JAMES P. MCGOVERN, Mr. GREGORY MEEKS, and Mr. PETE STARK to honor the extraordinary contributions of Father Javier de Nicoló, a champion for the impoverished and forgotten children of Colombia. The methodology that he developed and instituted through the Bosconia Program, a child services program for children who live in the street without parents, serves as a model throughout the world.

Father Javier de Nicoló was born in Bari, Italy on April 29, 1928. At 18, shortly after the

end of World War II, he decided to join the Salesian Community in Naples, which has a strong record for its work with the poor. In 1948, he emigrated to Agua de Dios in Colombia to treat patients with Hansen's disease. In the late 1960s, Father de Nicoló served as the chaplain of the Carcel de Menores, a prison in Bogotá for minors.

There, Father de Nicoló learned that children entering Bogotá's prisons were beaten, robbed, and raped. This experience hardened them, making it difficult to reintroduce them into society. Father de Nicoló recognized the need to provide structure and guidance in the lives of abandoned children who roamed the street—before they found themselves in prison. In 1970, with 20 children released from the Carcel de Menores on his personal recognition, he organized Bosconia, a small, experimental learning community in the slums of Bogotá. Over time, Javier witnessed the transformation of hundreds of irresolute boys into confident and independent young adults through participation in his program.

In Bogotá, there are several thousand boys from ages 5 to 15 who live in anarchy. Death is a looming reality for Bogotá's street children. For many years, Colombia has experienced the highest child murder rate in the world. Vigilante groups engage in driveby shootings or "social cleansing" as they label it, which lead to the massacre of hundreds of children each year. Nearly all street children carry knives, which they use for protection and to intimidate others. Inevitably, some children kill each other in a scuffle that turns deadly. Dozens of children kill themselves by smoking highly addictive cocaine which can lead to paralysis. Child prostitutes contract AIDS and spread the disease.

What began as an experiment in the early 1970s has grown into an organization whose branches reach thousands of children in Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, and Buenaventura. The Bosconia Program is a mixture of vocational training and a boarding program designed to help the children ease themselves off the streets into a more traditional lifestyle. With only a handful of adult supervisors, it graduates a growing number of young adults into the workforce on a tight budget. Bosconia operates on the philosophy that the wit and spunk a child uses to survive in the street reflects an intelligence that the program's educators can redirect. In fact, the Bosconia Program has been replicated by many organizations in numerous countries. Nearly 20,000 youngsters from the street have been rescued by the Bosconia Program, saved from indifference and generalized violence, becoming elevated as individuals and members of society.

Programming at Bosconia strengthens the character of children who once lived in the streets of Colombia and provides them with the resources that they need to become active participants in society. Attracted to the promise of a better life, boys voluntarily enter the courtyard of Bosconia. The mark of those anarchic days of stealing, starving half-freezing, fear and bravado passes from their faces. They have learned to respect themselves because Father Javier de Nicoló, his associates, and the other boys had respected them.

Although graduates of Bosconia have the character and the will to engage in the Colombian workforce, the unemployment rate is steadily rising. Decades of violence that include murder, robbery, and kidnappings that

has ravaged the countryside have brought millions of rural people into the country's cities. Those that graduate from Bosconia will need more than spiritual transformation if they hope to compete for jobs that will allow them to live with dignity. This cold reality has encouraged Javier de Nicoló to seek private funds to establish a program that will allow his pupils to receive on-the-job training, earn and save money, and gain experience in managing small enterprises.

Many social scientists believe that personalities rarely change after children reach their teenage years. To the contrary, Javier de Nicoló has taught us that the odds can be beaten and that we should never forfeit our children—our future—to the vices that plague our streets. We should nurture them, inspire them, and invigorate their minds with the dream of living healthy and fulfilling lives. The world can use more people with the compassion and motivation of Father Javier de Nicoló. The children of Colombia are truly blessed to have him as their guardian. We thank him for his work, his resolve to make a better life for destitute children, and we learn from the wisdom of his successful model, seeking opportunities to replicate this success globally.

By dedicating over three decades to rescuing and integrating lost children into society, Father de Nicoló inspires a call for global solidarity and responsibility—one that reaches beyond the geographic bounds of Colombia. He has developed a process to guide personal and social renovation, giving life to children who are waiting for an opportunity to rejoin their families and communities as well as exercise their citizenship without discrimination. We applaud this leader who is a tireless advocate for the human rights of all our world's children.

HONORING ROBERT MOSES FOR  
LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO  
EDUCATION

**HON. MICHAEL E. CAPUANO**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, September 28, 2004*

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Robert Moses who tonight will receive the prestigious Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education. Dr. Moses is a Civil Rights activist, math educator and creator of the highly acclaimed Algebra Project, which is located in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Along with Dr. Moses, Geoffrey Canada, Cecelia Cunningham and Janet Lieberman are being honored during an awards ceremony at the New York Public Library. The four have been chosen to receive the prestigious 17th annual award for dedicating themselves to closing the achievement gap. These individuals have worked tirelessly and creatively to give children with few advantages the opportunity to achieve, both academically and ultimately professionally.

Dr. Moses believes that math literacy is the key to 21st Century citizenship. He created the Algebra Project to help middle school students make the conceptual shift from arithmetic to algebra so they can be prepared for algebra in the eighth grade, and thus a college preparatory math sequence in high school. Three decades later, the Algebra Project