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By:  Rodriguez H.R. No. 1773

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, The Austin arts community lost a trailblazing leader with the death of Ballet East Dance Company founder and artistic director Rodolfo Méndez on May 5, 2019, at the age of 74; and

WHEREAS, An East Austin native, "Rudy" Méndez won a statewide dance competition in high school and went on to attend the prestigious Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York City; he studied flamenco dance and culture in Spain on a Fulbright Scholarship and then joined the Peace Corps; while developing dance and theater programs for children in Costa Rica and Chile, he found his true calling, providing others with the opportunities for artistic expression and personal transformation that he had enjoyed; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Méndez established Ballet East in his hometown in 1978 to give young dancers and choreographers a place to flourish; he brought in guest instructors from national companies, as well as from the local scene, and he created community-building outreaches and initiatives such as Dare to Dance, which uses dance and theatrical performance to improve self-esteem and critical thinking skills among middle and high school students; the program was recognized by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts; encouraging youngsters to explore Latin American culture, he launched the Ballet Folklorico program, encompassing free workshops as well as a dance company; in 2009, he created the Eastside Dance Academy at Eastside Memorial High School; and

WHEREAS, Warm, kind, and caring, Mr. Méndez was a role model to thousands of young Texans and instilled discipline, pride, and confidence while also coaching them on ways to overcome personal challenges; he was a mentor to a host of colleagues as well, and he shared his expertise generously with other nonprofit organizers; among the many accolades he received were the Award of Excellence from the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center and the Cesar E. Chavez "Sí Se Puede" Award from PODER, and in 2006, he was inducted into the Austin Arts Hall of Fame by the Austin Critics Table; and

WHEREAS, Rudy Méndez enriched the lives of innumerable people and greatly enhanced the cultural arts in Austin, and although he will be deeply missed, he will remain a source of tremendous inspiration to all who were privileged to know him; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Rodolfo Méndez and extend sincere condolences to all who mourn his passing; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Rodolfo Méndez.