

By: Rodriguez

H.R. No. 1773

R E S O L U T I O N

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

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

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

1 Eastside Dance Academy at Eastside Memorial High School; and

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

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

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

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