

2015-J2751

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the 25th Anniversary of El Buen Amigo, and paying tribute to owner, Santiago Masferrer

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize the achievements of those individuals and businesses which substantially contribute to the economic vitality and cultural enrichment of their communities and the entire Empire State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of El Buen Amigo, and to pay tribute to owner, Santiago Masferrer; and

WHEREAS, El Buen Amigo is a fair trade business located in the heart of the Allentown district in Buffalo, offering arts, crafts, clothing and coffee direct from artisans and farmers throughout Latin America; and

WHEREAS, For the past 25 years, El Buen Amigo has showcased the beauty and the value of Latino culture by offering beautiful handcrafted items at fair prices from artisans in Central and South America, the Caribbean, and other nations; it strives to provide impoverished individuals from developing countries with a living income and the opportunity to maintain a sustainable lifestyle for both they and their families; and

WHEREAS, Santiago Masferrer, the esteemed owner of El Buen Amigo, emigrated to America 40 years ago in search of a better life after being wrongfully imprisoned in his native Chile; and

WHEREAS, On September 11, 1973, General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the democratic government of Chile and installed a military junta; thousands of people were arrested for being suspected dissidents; and

WHEREAS, Santiago Masferrer, a civilian employee of the national police and a housing association volunteer at the time, received a phone

call to report to a police precinct; he surrendered himself, and was promptly arrested; and

WHEREAS, For six months, Santiago Masferrer was held prisoner in solitary confinement where he lived in a very small cell under deplorable conditions; and

WHEREAS, Upon his release, Santiago Masferrer sought political asylum in the United States, in hopes of teaching Americans a better appreciation of South American culture; and

WHEREAS, Although originally planning to join a Chilean community in Milwaukee, Santiago Masferrer found himself starting a new life in Buffalo, New York; and

WHEREAS, Following his arrival in Western New York, Santiago Masferrer founded the Latin American Cultural Association; he and his wife also found jobs at Millard Fillmore Hospital; and

WHEREAS, In 1984, Santiago Masferrer left the hospital, and became a carpentry instructor at Attica Prison; he later accepted a position at Orleans County Correctional Facility; and

WHEREAS, Sincerely dedicated to helping prison inmates, Santiago Masferrer administered the Inmate Program Associates initiative at Orleans from 1993 to 2004, where he worked tirelessly to enable prisoners to pursue their college degrees; and

WHEREAS, Today, this remarkable man shares his love of Latin American stories, arts, and culture with the Buffalo community at El Buen Amigo, with the help of an array of teachers, volunteers, and interns; and

WHEREAS, This auspicious occasion presents a unique opportunity for this Legislative Body to recognize and pay tribute to Santiago Masferrer for his outstanding service to the Buffalo community as owner of El Buen Amigo; and

WHEREAS, It is with great pleasure that this Legislative Body acknowledges this exceptional business and its contributions to the local and State economies, fully confident that it will continue to enjoy the

sparkling successes it has experienced over the past 25 years; and

WHEREAS, It is also the sense of this Legislative Body that when individuals of such noble aims and accomplishments are brought to our attention, they should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of El Buen Amigo and to pay tribute to owner, Santiago Masferrer; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Santiago Masferrer.