

## SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: Jose Torres



Douglas Homes resident Jose Torres helps distribute breakfast and lunch to those who need to vacate their apartments during the renovation project happening in the building.

Jose Torres enjoys helping fellow residents at Douglas Homes. He helps distribute food to those in need from the food pantry, serves as an interpreter for Spanish-speaking residents when needed and is ensuring residents who need to vacate their apartments during renovations get breakfast and lunch.

“He is a very helpful and caring individual towards his fellow residents,” said Douglas Homes Care Coordinator Luz Toro. “Currently he is assisting Social Services during the renovations by making coffee and tea and distributing breakfast and lunches for the residents that are waiting in the Community Room while their apartments are being renovated. Mr. Torres also volunteers when we receive commodities and food bank distribution.”

Torres was born in Puerto Rico and moved to the United States when he was 6 years old. He was raised in Hoboken before moving to Jersey City, where he spent 30 years.

After he lost his job and the rent became too high for him where he was living in Jersey City, Torres needed to move. The secretary of his cardiologist overheard him talking about his situation and referred him to New Community because she knew the building manager at Douglas Homes at the time.

Torres was reluctant to move to Newark, but after visiting, he decided to give it a chance. He applied and moved into his apartment six years ago. He’s glad he did.

“It’s not a bad area. Ninety-eight percent of the people are nice,” he said. “I’m happy.”

Torres was an assistant supervisor for a garment company in Secaucus, did work in construction and a warehouse and was an assistant funeral director for 10 years.

He is also a veteran. He volunteered for the U.S. Army and served in the Vietnam War.

Torres said those who fought in Vietnam were the worst ever treated. It saddens him when he sees other veterans struggling.

“I see so many homeless veterans,” he said. “I don’t think any veteran should be homeless.”

Torres, who turned 61 in January, has three children: a daughter and two sons. His oldest son followed in his footsteps by joining the military. He is currently a member of the U.S. Army and did two tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Every time he was at war I would pray and wait for him to call,” Torres said. “Then I knew how my parents felt.”

Two years ago, Torres had knee replacement surgery that was done improperly and left him in a wheelchair for about a year. After a second surgery, he regained the ability to walk, but he experiences pain every day.

Because he has seen the effects of drugs, Torres doesn’t take all the painkillers he’s prescribed.

“I’m afraid to get addicted,” he said. “I’ve had too many friends die of drug addiction.”

Though he has physical limitations, he remains optimistic.

“I thank God I’m still alive,” he said. “And at least I can walk now.”

Torres likes to play pool and loves swimming in his spare time.

He enjoys living at Douglas Homes because he’s close to the majority of his family who reside in downtown Jersey City and he feels a sense of camaraderie with his neighbors.

“We look out for each other on the floor,” he said.