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# MEMORANDUM

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Date: October 29, 2008

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members  
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator 

Re: **Ajo Curley School Project Receives National HUD Award**

I am very pleased to inform you that the County-supported Curley School Project in Ajo was recently presented the annual HUD Secretary's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation at the 2008 National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The following press release about the Curly School award was issued by the National Trust for Historic Preservation on Thursday October 23, 2008.

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Today, the National Trust for Historic Preservation presented the Curley School Project in Ajo, AZ its National Trust/HUD Secretary's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation. The project was one of 21 national award winners honored by the National Trust during its 2008 National Preservation Conference in Tulsa, OK.

When the Curley School opened in 1919, it was the pride of the small copper mining town Ajo, AZ. An architectural masterpiece of Spanish Colonial design, it was the town's largest building and sat on a seven-acre campus. When the mines shut down, Ajo lost its economic base and much of its population. The Curley School closed its doors and soon fell into disrepair. Reclaiming such a large, dilapidated building was a risky proposition in an isolated, unincorporated town. Fortunately, public and private partners came together to take on the challenge, used federal tax credits, a variety of other funding sources and the labor of local citizens, to restore Curley School as the centerpiece of a community-wide revitalization effort.

In its largest single endeavor to date, the International Sonoran Desert Alliance spearheaded the \$8.9 million rehabilitation of the historic school. The renovation converted the abandoned property into 30 affordable live/work rentals for artists and creative home businesses. The mixed-use development in the heart of town also includes classrooms, offices, a computer lab and an indoor-outdoor auditorium that has already become a popular venue for community events. Residents also have access to services ranging from business-development training and employment counseling to health and youth programs and homeownership assistance.

**The Honorable Chairman and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors**  
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The renovated school has given the Ajo community a new economic and cultural lease on life. More than one million tourists travel through the town on their way to Mexico or to nearby national desert areas, while many retirees have winter homes there. Today, with the influx of artists and artisans, the Curley School is generating a new economic base and fostering reinvestment in this remote rural community, steadily transforming it into a destination for cultural tourism.

"The restoration of Curley School is an example of how preservation can restore vitality, hope and pride to a community," says Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Co-nominees honored today for the Curley School Project's Preservation Award are: The Honorable Sharon Bronson, The Architecture Company and TBR Construction & Engineering.

The National Preservation Awards are bestowed on distinguished individuals, nonprofit organizations, public agencies and corporations whose skill and determination have given new meaning to their communities through preservation of our architectural and cultural heritage. These efforts include citizen attempts to save and maintain important landmarks; companies and craftsmen whose work restores the richness of the past; the vision of public officials who support preservation projects and legislation in their communities; and educators and journalists who help Americans understand the value of preservation. The winners of the National Preservation Awards will appear in the November/December issue of Preservation Magazine and online at [www.PreservationNation.org/magazine](http://www.PreservationNation.org/magazine).

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CHH/jj