

Philanthropy with difference

• *How an American touched the lives of millions*

By VICTOR AMADI

The story of Portable Practical Educational Preparation (PPEP) Inc is one that will delight any discernible mind. Established in the United States of America, the organization has spread its tentacle across the world and has made impact in philanthropy.

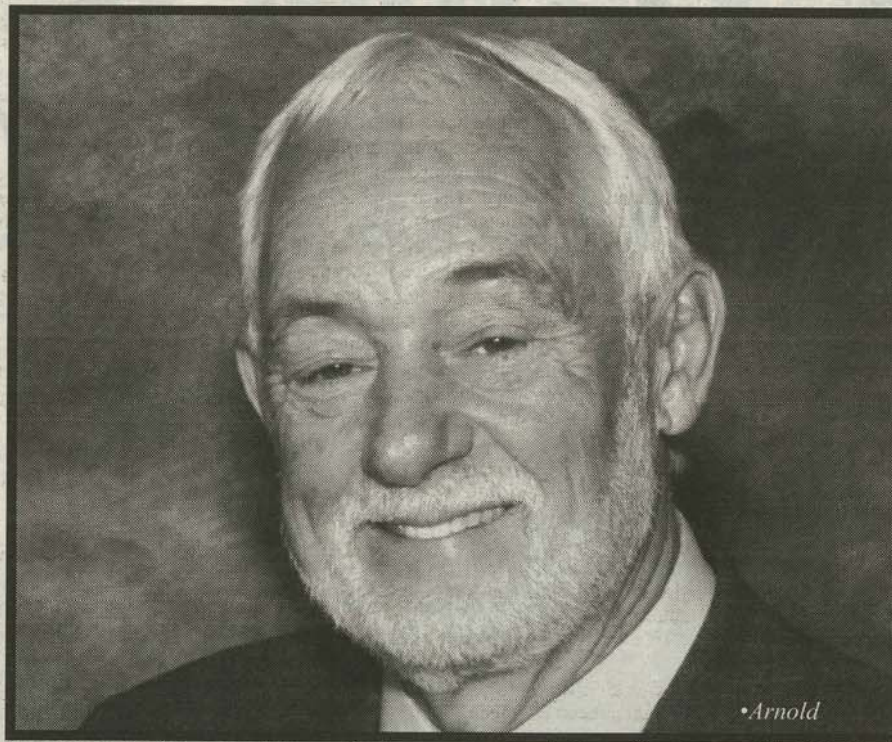
Perhaps, when Dr. John David Arnold, who takes a great pleasure in serving humanity, wrote the first PPEP Inc proposal, which was submitted to the Tucson War on Poverty Programme initiated by the Kennedy/Johnson Administration, he may not have known that his initiative would blossom to a global phenomenon. With an initial funding of \$19,000, from which Arnold bought a 48-passenger 1957 Chevrolet school bus, known as “La Tortuga” (the Tortoise), this dynamic organization has grown into a multi-million philanthropic entity.

When Arnold bought a school bus with the initial funding, he was the driver, mechanic and school teacher imparting practical educational teachings to help the Bracero farm workers prepare themselves to survive in society. Having lived in Mexico, he understood first-hand what it meant to live in an unfamiliar environment, with a different language and culture.

In 40 years, Arnold, the PPEP board of directors and dedicated staff have carried out the dreams to “improve the quality of life” of the farm workers and rural poor who visited the bus in those formative years. His work has been cited as national models 10 times in U.S Congressional Records, including citations by U.S Congressmen Udall, Kolbe, Grijalva, Gifford and senators: Deoncini, McCain, Kyl and Enzi of Wyoming. Also, his programmes have been honoured twice at the White House, among numerous other nationally and internationally recognitions.

US Congressman, Ed Pastor wrote: “It is your vision and energy that transformed ‘La Tortuga’ into a major force for ‘improving the quality of life in Arizona and the world.’”

U.S. Senator, Mike Enzi wrote: “You may be



•Arnold

the most innovative person I know. It’s always fascinating to learn of your new and intriguing advances, plus being a voice for the migrant farm worker and their kids.”

Senator McCain stated: “Ultimately much of our future depends on programmes such as PPEP.”

The U.S. Department of Education awarded PPEP the High School Equivalency Programme (HEP), a second five-year contract to assist adult migrant farm workers to obtain their GED certification. This is the first HEP programme attached to a charter school anywhere in the America nation. To date, some 1000 farm worker parents have graduated from the HEP pro-

gramme in Yuma County alone. The HUD funded Youth Build programme has served 40 drop outs with construction skills and jobs building other farm workers homes in San Luis and Somerton, Arizona.

In the mid 1980s, PPEP Inc. was the Navaja Nation’s largest sub-contractor in job training, affordable housing and computer training. In 2000, he organized the farm worker LULAC Council, numbering 1088, which has become the nation’s largest adult council (300 members) as well as 11 LULAC Youth (200 member), one LULAC KIDZ, seven adult LULAC councils, mostly among Arizona’s farm worker and rural regions. In 2005, he was appointed Rocky

Mountain State Region Chaplain and received, “The Presidential Citation” for his services. In 2006, the LULAC National President Rosa Rosales appointed Dr. Arnold as both LULAC National Chair of Education, and Chair of International Relations, which are among the league of United, Latin America Citizens highest Priorities. In 2007, he organized LULAC’s first international council in Hermosillo, Mexico.

On weekends in Patagonia, Arizona, Arnold manages and controls Grayce’s gift and candle shop as well as the Dia de Los Muertos Museum, which the Smithsonian Institute has recognized as the “first of its kind in North America.”

Arnold served on the Tucson Metropolitan Education Council for 10 years (1990-2000). He has been instrumental in establishing 13 farm worker, rural and inner city PPEP Tec Charter high schools, which have graduated 3500 ‘at risk’ students with full high school diplomas. In 2003, PPEP organized the Arizona Virtual Academy, a k-12 grade on-line Instructional programmes, have over 4, 500 students. In 2007, a partnership with Insight of the University of Phoenix has opened virtual charter high schools in California and Idaho. He has advocated the establishment of a charter school advisory committees for the Arizona Department of Education and Governor Janet Napolitano.

In 1985, Arnold organized one of the first micro business programmes in the U.S. with a model imported from Mexico. To date, this programme has lent over 20 million US dollars to micro business located primarily on the U.S./Mexico border region.

Arnold has also served on the National Farmer worker Advisory Council for the U.S. Department of Labour under two secretaries, providing consultation. Most recently, he has been active in the formation of the Bi National Trade council promoting import and export and expositions of Micro business products, which has been called the “Mini or Micro NAFTA”. In 1990 also, a donation of \$5,000 was made to FAI de Sonora to capitalize their micro loan fund, which presently is one of the largest in recognizes this effort.