

## [Hector Gesualdo, ASPIRA of New York Executive Director dedicated his life to helping others](#) **[1]**

By [Julia Terruso/The Star-Ledger](#) [2]

On nights when Hector Gesualdo had to work late, he'd come home with gifts for his three children — pieces of candy or little toys. It was a small gesture that often sparked the frustration and quiet admiration of his wife, Rita, who'd already tucked the kids into bed. But Gesualdo was, as his son described him, "always a giver." Whether at home or at work, he made a life of helping people.

On Wednesday, December 28th, the husband and father of three, died suddenly of complications following a heart attack. He was 59. For 25 years the Livingston resident worked as vice president of fundraising for the United Way of New York City.



In 1999 he became executive director of ASPIRA of New York. In his 12 years with ASPIRA more than 40,000 students went through the youth development programs. "He genuinely enjoyed helping others, that's what got his juices flowing," said his son, Michael, 33. "He was always a giver and he said he wanted to do it as long as he could, and he did." "Hector made a monumental contribution to ASPIRA of NY and to the ASPIRA movement nationally over many years. The entire ASPIRA family is deeply saddened by his passing. Our prayers are with his family, especially his wife and children. Hector will be sorely missed" said Ronald Blackburn-Moreno, President and CEO of the ASPIRA Association.

Hector's upbringing in Jersey City sparked his interest in giving back, family members said. He had watched neighborhood kids in the Montgomery Gardens housing project where he lived struggle to stay in school and stay out of trouble. His determination and the support of his parents, both Puerto Rican immigrants who worked at the Bayonne Printing factory, kept him on the right track.

Hector graduated from St. Peter's University in Jersey City and earned a masters of social work from Hunter College, where he met his wife, Rita. "He was a phenomenal person. A man of great generosity," said Sunil Anand, Chief Financial Officer of ASPIRA. "He came from humble beginnings and he never forgot that. He stayed very well grounded every day." An avid fan of barbecue and cooking, Gesualdo told friends and family if he weren't working in the nonprofit sector he'd have been a chef.

Hector is survived by his wife Rita C. (Marinello), a son, Michael Gesualdo, and his wife, Mariel; a son, James Gesualdo, and his wife, Jacqueline; his daughter, Rita Ann Gesualdo, and three grandchildren; Lucia, Elise, and Vincent.



## ASPIRA News:

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