

NCLA names Latina of the Year

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The San Diego North County Latinas Association is an organization whose mission is to create a healthy quality of life for all Latinas by empowering them socially and economically through education. MiraCosta College Student Employment Coordinator Lisa Montes was named "Latina of the Year." Montes was nominated by her peers and recognized for her achievements by the organization. She has impacted the lives of many young men through her efforts serving on the board of Encuentros.

The North County Latinas Association, as part of National Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15 through October 15, honored nine extraordinary Latinas, including Montes, promoting their achievements and contributions as positive role models in the community.

"This is no surprise and certainly long overdue," says Encuentros Leadership founder Roberto Rivas. "Lisa represents a shining beacon of leadership and hope in our Latino community."

"Being named 'Latina of the Year' is an honor and was totally unexpected. I am honored to receive this award, because it came from my peers who took the time to nominate me. My work with Latino youth will continue in our community and schools," Montes said, when asked about the honor.

Montes, who is of English, Mexican and Native American Descent, is deeply rooted in the community. "My family has always served the community, so it was just natural that I followed the legacy. I am a

fifth generation Californian and third generation resident of Solana Beach. In fact, my maternal grandparents were one of the founding families, the Gonzales and Scott families, of Eden Gardens, a close knit community in Solana Beach," stated Montes.

"When I was a young girl, I remember my grandmother making hundreds of cascarones, confetti eggs, to raise money for my community. I also remember my father serving as Fiesta Chairman for my local church's three day fiesta in Eden Gardens. My mom managed the Fiesta Queen Contest. My father served on the Board of the Chicano Federation, as well as Chairman for the San Dieguito Chapter of the American GI Forum," said Lisa Montes.

Her dedication to giving back to her community includes serving as adviser to the Puente Club and the Latina Leadership Network Club at MiraCosta College. She has also chaperoned the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship Club at a few of their events and fundraised for the American Diabetes Association, the Mexican American Educational Guidance Association and the BECA Foundation.

Montes has served on the United Way of San Diego County's advisory committee, as well as the Executive Board of the Latina Leadership Network of the California Community Colleges and as the statewide conference co-chair in 1999. Montes is a graduate of the Leadership Training Institute. In 2000, she received the Madrina of the Year Award from the Latina Leadership Network of the California Community Colleges for excelling as a role model for Latinas by providing

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guidance and mentoring.

In 2003, Montes became involved with Encuentros Leadership, serving as the coordinator of their Career Expo. She has served as Encuentros Conference Chair for four years and also participates in other organization activities, such as the highly recognized Encuentros Summer Leadership Academy, which takes place at California State University San Marcos, and the Encuentros course held at Vista Unified School District.

“Currently, I serve as Vice President of Community Programs on the Encuentros Executive Board. I sit on this diverse Board of incredibly talented and dedicated professionals from Kaiser Permanente, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Tri City Medical Center, CSUSM, Palomar College and many other organizations. In fact, Dr. Julian Nava, the first Latino admitted into Harvard, sits on our board as well,” said Montes

Her leadership in community efforts gives her great satisfaction. “My dedication to Encuentros has brought a newfound purpose to my life. Instead of being frustrated with the high school and college dropout rate among Latino men, I have channeled my energy into working with parents, school districts, politicians and industry to create change in our schools and community. It has enabled me to meet some incredibly dedicated and caring individuals throughout California and the nation. It has created stronger ties with my fellow colleagues at MiraCosta, as well as students and community members,” said Montes.