

[Metro.net](#) (web)

Resources

► [Safety](#)

► [Pressroom](#) (web)

► [Ask the CEO](#)

► [CEO Forum](#)

► [Employee Recognition](#)

► [Employee Activities](#)

► [Metro Projects](#)

► [Facts at a Glance](#)
(web)

► [Archives](#)

► [Events Calendar](#)

► [Research Center/ Library](#)

► [Metro Classifieds](#)

► [Bazaar](#)

Metro Info

► [30/10 Initiative](#)

► [Policies](#)

► [Training](#)

► [Help Desk](#)

► [Intranet Policy](#)

Need e-Help?

Call the Help Desk
at 2-4357

[Contact myMetro.net](#)

Metro's Desiree Portillo-Rabinov Recognized for Outstanding Community Service

- Transportation planning manager co-founded an organization to fight unemployment, school dropout rate among Latinos

By JENNIE HARRIS

(June 8, 2007) Twelve years ago Desiree Portillo-Rabinov co-founded Project Amiga, a community-based, nonprofit organization that aims to lower the unemployment and school dropout rate among Latinos.

On June 1, she received a community service award during the YWCA San Gabriel Valley 2007 Women of Achievement ceremony for her work with Project Amiga.

"I was just totally shocked," she said when she learned of the award. "I had no idea."

Project Amiga works to increase skills and employment opportunities of Latinos. Classes address literacy, parenting, computer, and job search skills. Classrooms sizes are never more than 10, allowing for more one-on-one attention.

Sites are located in South El Monte, Downtown LA, and East LA, aiding about 1,500 men and women annually. However, participants don't usually disappear after a year.

"They come back for a couple of years and refresh their skills," said Portillo-Rabinov. "They also help facilitate toy and food drives. They feel very connected. It's become a community."

\$1.1 million city grant

Project Amiga's Gang Reduction Program received, in conjunction with four other organizations, a Gang Awareness Outreach city grant totaling \$1.1 million in April 2006.

Portillo-Rabinov has also served as national president of the Comision Femenil Mexicana National and as a legislative analyst for the National Council of La Raza.

How does she manage to fit it all in? "I do this after work, weekends,



Desiree Portillo-Rabinov earned awards from the YWCA for community service and from the National Latino Children's Institute for Project Amiga. Photo by Jennie Harris.

and, fortunately I use my lunch hour. Sometimes I take days off. That's why you have vacation time."

She has a family as well. Her daughter, Paloma, is 13, and her son, David, is 11.

"What's great about my family is that they go with me everywhere I go," said Portillo-Rabinov. "I take them to meetings every weekend."

"I want them to develop the same volunteerism that I have," she said. "To give back, and to feel that they're fortunate. They need to feel responsible, as well, to help them."

While the awards ceremony was nice, "If I'm doing a great job out there, that's what counts. That's the greatest gift."