



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rosa Harrizon, Santa Ana College Co-Founder of Padres Promotores Program, Receives Apple of Gold Award

(Santa Ana)—Rosa Harrizon, Santa Ana College (SAC) student services specialist and co-founder of the Padres Promotores de la Educación program, will receive an Apple of Gold Award for Excellence in Community Services at the Orange County Hispanic Education Endowment Fund's (HEEF) 16th Annual Apple of Gold Gala Awards Dinner on Friday, October 16 at the Anaheim Hilton Hotel.

Since 1994, HEEF has honored local educators for excellence in teaching and educational leadership at the annual gala event. According to HEEF, the Apple of Gold Award recipients have followed a path connecting them to professional and educational excellence in their respective classrooms, districts, and communities.

“Ever since Rosa Harrizon joined Santa Ana College’s Padres Promotores program,” said Sara Lundquist, Ph.D., SAC vice president of student services, “she has been a driving force that has inspired countless Santa Ana parents to come to understand that higher education is not just a dream, but an achievable reality.”

Shortly after Santa Ana College received an ENLACE grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Houston Endowment, Inc., in 2001, Harrizon attended a parent meeting at McFadden Intermediate where her daughter was enrolled. Always interested in doing whatever she could to support her children’s educational achievement, the concept of a Padres Promotores program captured her attention and she volunteered to be among the first cadre of parent promotores. In 2004, Harrizon was hired by the college as a student services specialist to help guide the program

Each year, a group of 40 Latino parents are recruited and trained to go out into the community and share information about the K-12 educational system and the steps required to pursue higher education. The fall Padres Promotores training session gets underway on Friday, October 16 at the Delhi Center in Santa Ana—the same day as the Apple of Gold Gala.

“I will tell the promotores to be humble and patient, be very good listeners, and show enthusiasm, and, above all have a big heart to understand the parents’ needs,” said Harrizon.

For her, ensuring that Santa Ana parents understand the educational system and the

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importance of getting an education is a passion. She knows firsthand what it is to dream of an education and be kept from getting one. She comes from a family of eight. As the oldest girl, her father wouldn't let her go to high school. She had to stay home to help her mother care for her younger siblings. It wasn't until she got married at 27 that she finally was able to go back to school. Then, she attended Santa Ana College and completed a certificate that enabled her to teach preschool, which she did for four years until she had her two daughters, Jennifer and Emily. In supporting her children, she became a leader at her daughters' schools, which led to her role with Padres Promotores.

"We never tell a parent that we will teach them," said Harrizon. "We say that we will share what we have learned. We are like a bridge from the school to the home and to the community."

After they are trained, the promotores come together for monthly meetings with the objective of planning for home visits. Each promotor is responsible for a certain number of initial and follow-up home visits a month, for which they receive a stipend. They also receive ongoing training to sharpen their communication skills and deepen their knowledge about California's postsecondary education requirements. They learn that the three most important subjects for students to take are math, English, and language arts. They gain self-esteem and appreciation for how important they are in their children's education. And, once they start conducting home visits, they discover that not only do Santa Ana parents need information about the U.S. school system, but they also crave the personal connection that the Padres Promotores program provides.

Many Santa Ana residents speak limited English and face residency challenges while struggling to make ends meet. They feel isolated in meeting the challenges of raising a child in the U.S. and fear they are losing their connection with their children. "We tell them, 'I've been there and I know it's hard, but we need to be strong because our kids need us,'" explained Harrizon. And whenever needed, they make referrals to key community resources.

"It's a challenge every day; you just don't know what these kids are going through," she said.

Additional honorees at this year's event include Excellence in K-12 Educational Leadership: Kasey Klappenback, teacher, Heroes Elementary School, Santa Ana Unified School District; and Excellence in University Instruction: Luis Ortiz-Franco, Ph.D., computer science and applied mathematics, Chapman University.

About the Rancho Santiago Community College District

The mission of the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) is to respond to the educational needs of an ever-changing community and to provide programs and services that reflect academic excellence. Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College are public community colleges of RSCCD, which serve the residents of Anaheim Hills, East Garden Grove, Irvine, Orange, Santa Ana, Tustin and Villa Park. Both colleges provide education for academic transfer and careers, courses for personal and professional development, customized training for business and industry, and programs to train nurses, firefighters and law enforcement personnel.

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