

# ARISE

Educación y Cultura Para Tu Futuro

A Resource in Serving  
Equality

*Welcome to ARISE.  
Bienvenidos a ARISE.*

March 2011

ISSUE 2



*Norma Belen Cosino with her hand-painted flower arrangement made from plastic bottles, designed in an ARISE workshop.*

## INSIDE:

### AINE O'CONNOR

How her experiences in other countries led her to ARISE.

2

### DIA DE LA MUJER 2011

ARISE celebrates International Day of the Woman: Photos

3

## Much to Do... Much to Share...

We have had some amazing experiences at ARISE these past few weeks. In February, along with other groups that form part of the Equal Voice Network, we travelled to Austin to be part of a statewide march and rally against anti-immigration legislation. ARISE centers have also had many visitors, festivities, workshops, and we even planted an organic garden at ARISE Support Center. In a few months we hope to be biting into sweet watermelons and making salsa from our habanero chiles and tomatoes. Of course, we promise to share if you just happen to stop by for a visit!



Petra Hernandez, Sylvia Tovar, Aine O'Connor, & Emilia Vega  
at ARISE South Tower

*Aine O'Connor is a Sister of Mercy from South Central who spent two months working with the women of ARISE. She is originally from Ireland, and currently lives in Baltimore, MD. She joined the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in 1995. This past year Aine had the opportunity to meet with and learn from community organizers in different parts of the world. She spoke to me about that experience and how it led her to ARISE.*

I wanted to gain a better appreciation of global poverty, especially the systems that cause nearly half the population in our world today to be extremely poor and disadvantaged. Above all, I did not want to “study” people or the issue of global poverty from a book or a classroom. I wanted to meet people, hear about their lives, experiences with poverty, dreams & hopes and learn from them. I began this journey as an intern at our Mercy Global Concern office at the United Nations in New York. From there, I travelled to countries in Asia such as Cambodia, India and the Philippines. I also spent time in Kenya and El Salvador.

**Why did I come to ARISE?** Our experience of the people and our encounter with the people is what changes our understanding of everything. I didn't want to go to places where we were doing for the people what the people can do for themselves. I had heard for years about the ARISE ministry being one centered on the people and on empowerment, with women as leaders. Despite the terrible disparities and inequalities that beset our world, I believe that people have the knowledge, strength and skills within themselves to come to life more fully and to address the unjust systems that cause poverty. It is very easy to only see the

terrible poverty before you. This is something that really impacted me when I first began my travels, trying not to focus on the school uniform of a kid in tatters, or the condition of a tin house in the slums. While it is important to see all of those things, the women of ARISE, India, Cambodia, the Philippines, and El Salvador have shown me that you can notice those things but also ask, “why is this so”. **It's the people together who can address the system.**

The work at ARISE reminds me considerably of the work I witnessed at the Barefoot College in Tilonia, India. They focus on the empowerment of Dalit women (who are referred to in their culture as the *untouchables*), and the promotion of people-centered development. Like ARISE, the Barefoot College is founded on the principle that people are powerful in and of themselves, and that they have the necessary resources within themselves to address sustainable development. Barefoot college and ARISE believe that the work must be based in the *colonia* or village, and that it must be led by those whom it serves. Barefoot College, which is based on Gandhian principles for living, questions our assumptions that people need a certain level of literacy, education, material goods, or a particular gender to be able to thrive and bring about change in their lives; being very much against people coming into a village with advanced degrees or from a different culture to solve the problems of persons who are poor, assuming they know better than the people themselves. My experience at ARISE tells me that what the people in India were doing, which was living out of their strengths communally and promoting sustainable lives for their families (through education, women having leadership roles in the community, and environmental sustainability), is also being exemplified here at ARISE.

We clearly need to be addressing the global, systemic and human-made systems that are killing and causing annihilation of the dignity of whole populations. The people need to raise the justice and dignity questions of our time. Then together we will walk the journey so that all people can come into the fullness of life.

On March 8th, ARISE Las Milpas hosted the 3rd annual DIA de la MUJER March & Celebration. Local organizations such as LUPE, Migrant Health Promotion, Clínica el Milagro, Clínica Ashley, South TX Civil Rights, Dynamic Children, National Latina Institute, United Way of S. TX, & TX A&M marched side-by-side with ARISE staff and community members promoting the honor of women in our

community. The march was followed by a celebration of music, food, raffle prizes and an awards ceremony honoring Eva Carranza. She was presented with the Gerrie Naughton Award (in honor of the founder of ARISE), which recognizes a woman who has shown exemplary leadership skills. Many thanks to all who participated and especially to the staff of ARISE Las Milpas for their creativity and hard work.





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<http://www.arisesotex.org>

## SUPPORT ARISE TODAY

There are many ways in which you can support the work of ARISE. These include volunteer work and in-kind donations of goods and services. You can make a tax-deductible monetary contribution by check sent to the following address:

**ARISE**

P.O. Box 778 Alamo, TX 78516

or by credit card:

<http://www.arisesotex.org/SupportOurWork.asp>