

# ARISE

A Resource In Serving Equality

Educación y Cultura  
Para Tu Futuro



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IDRA's Interview with  
Members of ARISE PTA



*"Through working with the PTA comunitario I discovered that I can do many things & I have lots of abilities. As women we have been told that we can't do things because we're women, because we're immigrants, because we haven't gone to school. That's wrong though because everyone can succeed in whatever they choose to do."*

-Eva Carranza,

Vice-President of ARISE PTA

*IDRA*, the Intercultural Development Research Association, has been supporting ARISE in all issues concerning education for a long time. Through their support, women from the community started the first national community PTA. The ARISE South Tower PTA has begun its third year, and this summer a new board of directors was elected. Many thanks go out to Eva Carranza, who served as president for the first 2 years. Her strong presence, infectious laugh, and innate leadership abilities helped guide the women of this organization in a positive direction. It's essential that we stand up for what we believe in, to stand up for those whose voices are not so strong yet, to stand up to systems that are in place to keep people down. ARISE is honored to stand side-by-side with the women who participate in the PTA comunitario.



# PTA Comunitario

*Aurelio Montemayor and Hector Bojorquez, from IDRA, visited with four women who have been with the PTA since it's inception. The following is a transcript from that interview. Eva Carranza, Emilia Vega, Angelica Nava and Carmen Vargas, spoke about their experience and passion for community engagement in education. To listen to the original interview in Spanish click [here](#).*



Eva Carranza



Emilia Vega



Angelica Nava



Carmen Vargas

**On the Benefits of a PTA Comunitario:** *Community PTAs like ours will benefit schools because parents will be much more involved. The difference between our PTA and the traditional kind is that ours is based not in a school but in a community organization. Parents have the leadership in this organization, not the principal or the professionals in a campus. Our organization is not run by the administrators. Our meetings are in Spanish, and parents are educated about many important topics related to school. Parents are trained to face the challenges brought upon by the continuous changes in schools. Title I schools can be even more supported by a PTA like this one. **Through the training offered by this PTA, parents are more informed about how the school is carrying out the educational program and therefore can be better partners in the education of their children.** We are communicating more with our children and supporting them to develop and grow. We are better prepared for all the changes happening in our schools. Our PTA is working hard so that schools don't have so much difficulty in communicating with parents. Our parents are better informed about what is happening in schools.*

**On the Unique Strengths of a PTA Comunitario:** *Two basic things make our organization very strong and unique: Our principles and IDRA's training and support. One key principle from ARISE that this PTA adheres to and is ingrained in us by our founder is the respect and dignity of every human being. She instilled in us that all human beings are created in the image of God and have many gifts and talents. Now, we as leaders pass on these same values with the confidence and trust she gave us. **Each person's dignity as a human being, his or her right to be listened to, and the right to receive an education... these are the principles we are grounded in.** We support parents to be prepared. We remind them that they are their child's first teacher, that they are key to their children's success. Our meetings are in contrast to the meetings typical PTA school campus meetings. Ours are dynamic with much participation. We conduct them in Spanish using words the community understands rather than complicated education words and concepts presented in English. Our meetings are lively.*

**On Meshing with ARISE:** *At our community centers, we have program cycles of 12 weeks, and we celebrate the completion of a cycle. Each participant of a program presents what he or she created, completed or learned. Our PTA follows that pattern. We have educational festivals with parents and students so that parents and young people learn together. We celebrate PTA cycles using our standard way of communicating: visiting homes and talking face-to-face with families. **Nothing can take the place of real, personal communication. We visit our families, assuring ourselves that they have the necessary information and offering transportation if needed.** The Community PTA is in perfect ARISE sync and meshes with how our centers operate. We have seasoned staff who have been with the organization for a good while and have observed that when ladies leave our PTA meeting or training session, they are ready to pass the information on to their neighbors, relatives and friends. New leadership is emerging from their PTA participation.*



**On Challenges:** *One big challenge our PTA Comunitario leadership has had was in getting schools to receive us. Some administrators said they did not have time to meet with us. Schools might perceive three or four mothers gathered together as a group coming to argue or fight. We've learned to be more organized and not to go to a school without an appointment. There is a great difference between how a school communicates with families and how ARISE communicates with families. We make personal visits to families. Families are informed as to what is happening, such as the PTA meetings. We make personal invitations when there is a presenter coming.*

**On Seeing Impact:** *We have discovered that when the woman gets educated, the whole family gets educated. Parents who participate in our PTA then approach their school with much more confidence. They are much more self-assured in dealing with their children's issues at school. We observe much more confident parents when confronting problems their children are having in school. They are much more ready to talk with school people asking more questions and seeking solutions. Our community is more informed and more assertive.*

**On Starting Your Own Community PTA:** *If anyone wants to consider starting their own community PTA they should be part of a community, love that community and especially love the children of that community. You need an organization that is based in that community and serves that community to provide the base. Families should be visited in person, not contacted through phone calls or notes sent with children or left in mailboxes. That doesn't work. The ARISE approach of personal communication is key. **Our very young PTA has had such success through the personal connections and trust the community has for us.** We are very grateful that those who provide the training from IDRA are very respectful of staff, volunteers and all our families. We are treated as equals.*



**ARISE South Tower Community PTA Board of Directors 2011-2013**

From L to R: Lourdes Flores, Petra Hernandez, Eva Carranza, Ana Maria Gonzalez, Lourdes Sierra, Sandra Carrillo

