

Rosie Hernandez

Country of origin: Mexico

Circumstances of arrival: Rosie and her husband came to northern California from Mexico City in 1987, when she was almost 19 years old. He worked cutting trees. She did not speak English, and had no other family in this country except her 21-year-old brother, who lived in Fresno. She began to learn English by watching television shows, using a Spanish/English dictionary to write down and translate words. The hardest part was the language barrier—she wanted to express herself openly, and she couldn't.

Rosie remembers the early years of her time in this country, when she, along with her husband, did seasonal work in the orchards and fields, picking apples, nectarines, plums, pears, among other fruits and vegetables, while also taking care of her young children.

Work/avocation: Rosie has been a Hotel Manager of Housekeeping for many years. In 2011, she was one of eight individuals from around the world to be honored with an Award for Excellence for her work as manager for the Marriott Hotel, which included a trip to Washington D.C. for the ceremony.

Rosie has worked as a volunteer for the Springfield Police Department's domestic violence program, and for Womenspace, working on the crisis line there, and helping with everything from paper work to child care. While holding down several jobs at a time, she also volunteered at schools her children attended when they were growing up.

She has a love of poetry and drawing, which she first discovered as a child growing up in Oaxaca, Mexico.

In the future, if I have the opportunity, I'd go back to school to learn more about counseling. I'm a person who, even though I have my challenges, I like to help people, I like to be there for them. That is my heart.

When I can help people, especially when they are not from here, I am there for them. Because I know it is not easy.

Instead of judging others for being different, learn from others. Get to know the people. And I think we will have a better place, a better country. And the kids....can learn in a more healthy environment.

Photographer: Irwin Noparstak

