

# Mission over the airwaves

María Barquín makes La Campesina a community asset

By Peter Madrid

**MARÍA BARQUÍN ISN'T MUCH OLDER THAN THE PEOPLE** she reaches out to every day.

Her business card reads: Local Programming and Public Relations Director, 88.3 FM La Campesina. Her unwritten title reads: Community leader, organizer and mentor to high school students.

"I try to use my story as inspiration for high school kids; to be a role model," Barquín says. "They can do it, too. I struggled when I was in college, but I focused on what I had to do. And I did it."

And what focus she possesses. The list of community involvement on her resume could easily be that of a more experienced civic leader.

Chief of Police Hispanic Advisory Committee. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Small Business Committee. Census 2000 Committee. Census 2010 Committee. Maricopa County Democratic Party precinct captain.

At age 30, Barquín has not let youthful exuberance get the best of her. Quite the contrary. When her family moved from Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, Mexico to Phoenix in 1991, she wasted no time in making a better life for those around her.

She graduated from Carl Hayden High School and attended Arizona State University. College was one of her first big hurdles. She applied for and was accepted into the prestigious Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, graduating in 2003 with a bachelor's degree in Broadcasting Business Management.

Looking back, she says her desire to succeed was fueled by a role model she never met: civil rights leader César E. Chávez.

In her office hangs a poster of Chávez. He founded the nonprofit National Farm Workers Service Center, Inc. Radio Campesina, a nonprofit radio station, is operated by the organization. Barquín has worked there for more than nine years, and for the past five years she has co-hosted an afternoon talk show with local community activist Alfredo Gutierrez.

"I know what it's like to be part of it," Barquín says of the plight of many of her listeners. "I can relate to them. I am one of them. I know I can make an impact."

"It was not as bad as far immigration issues when we first moved here," she recalls. "Just seeing my parents struggle ... that was enough for me to make a difference."

Barquín says there have been other role models and mentors in her life. Besides her parents, she gives credit to



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Phoenix City Councilman Michael Nowakowski for perpetuating her "Sí Se Puede" attitude.

"I believe I went through school and accomplished those things because of that attitude," she says. "I wanted to make my parents proud and thank them for all the sacrifices they made. What they (her mentors) gave me were more opportunities."

In her capacity with the radio station, Barquín gives back as well. She says providing accurate information is key.

"The way the immigration situation is now, there's lots of pressure out there," she says. "As soon as I get up in the morning, I turn on the TV, read the paper. When I go on the air, I provide people with the right information and answers. We don't scare people. We educate people. That's our responsibility."

"When you hear that (an immigration sweep), it could have been me. My parents. I can relate."

Barquín is no stranger to those in the business community and has received other offers with more money and prestige.

"My heart is here. The biggest paycheck is to see those people with questions on their faces. To give them hope. That's my biggest pay. I like to use myself as role model because it was hard for me," she says. "But it can be done. If I decide to move on, it will be (to start) my own business." ■