

Women Who Rock

Posted by [mannycruz](#) on June 8, 2011

SD METRO is proud to introduce 20 Women Who Rock, a group of outstanding professionals who have made a name for themselves in their careers and are making significant contributions to our community. All of the women here were nominated by our readers. While all of the other nominations were of people who have made impressive job and community contributions, we believe our final choices are particularly noteworthy. We would like to thank everyone who took part in the nomination process.

Sarita Fuentes, a San Diego native, didn't choose the easy path in life. She was a high school dropout and a single mother of two children, Damian and Paula. However, Fuentes dreamed of becoming a principal. She persevered and within six years, earned her high school diploma, associate's degree from Southwestern College, bachelor's degree and bilingual teaching credential from San Diego State University and a master's degree from Point Loma Nazarene College. For the past 17 years, Fuentes has built a commendable career in education, focused on giving back to the San Diego community. She began her career as a teacher for the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program and progressed to master teacher, assistant principal, principal, director of instructional support and finally principal and CEO of the Monarch School Project. At Monarch School, Fuentes has raised the bar for academic excellence with academic performance index (API) test scores increasing from 488 to a current score of 614 in high school and 728 in elementary school, while creating a warm and nurturing environment for children impacted by homelessness. She is a firm believer that all students are capable of achieving success if provided with rigorous curriculum, a safe environment and a strong support system. Throughout her career, Fuentes has received numerous honors for her hard work and dedication, including: finalist for *San Diego Magazine's* 2010 Woman of the Year award, featured leader in CNN's 2010 "Leader with Heart" series, 2009 Local Heroes Award by Union Bank, among many others.