

# Woman with a Heart for Bakersfield

## Denise Ornelas



Denise Ornelas has a heart of unending generosity. Her exceedingly generous and caring spirit overflows to her family, her friends, her colleagues, and our community. Denise gives lavishly of her time and resources. She brings exuberance and zeal to her efforts for the deaf impaired, young people, and the business community.

an ardent supporter of local business and economic development, having served on the board of directors of the Kern County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for over three years. She currently serves as chairwoman. Denise also gives of her time on the board of the chamber's Education Foundation. In recognition of her leadership in business, Denise was named by Latina Leaders of Kern County as one of its 2011 "Latinas Leading the Way" honorees.

Denise has been a tireless champion of deaf education since the birth of her daughter who was born deaf. At the time of Jessica's birth, screening programs were not in place. Denise saw a need and became an advocate for screening and comprehensive services for deaf children. She sought out services that not only would benefit Jessica, but others needing similar support. Denise, who is passionate about her mission to improve deaf education in Bakersfield, advocates tenaciously for additional supportive services for the community. She has served as president of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Parent and Teacher Organization for five years, and is in the process of bringing together a combined pre-kindergarten through high school deaf and hard of hearing parent organization that will offer a greater support network for families. After having been contacted frequently for her advice by distraught parents of deaf and hard of hearing newborns, Denise is creating a mentoring program that will guide parents in caring for their hearing impaired children and will help them to advance in their development. Denise encourages parents to get involved and get children to learn to read early.

Denise also has a fervent passion for business. She has been an entrepreneur since the age of 25 when she bought her first business, Allure Salon, which she still owns. Five years later, she added the family business to her ventures as she and her husband became owners of La Bonita. Denise is

Denise brings her love for her family and young people to the Bakersfield High School football and track teams as team mom and mentor. Countless youth have benefited from Denise's encouragement.

In 2013, Denise took on a new role as one of *Bakersfield Life's* "Dining Divas." She and four other women dine together and review local restaurants in town. Denise's passion and love for understanding people led her to return to school at age 32. She earned a bachelor's degree in human services and is currently working on her master's in business.

Denise has been married to Albert for 17 years. They have two beautiful children, Gabriel and Jessica. "Without the love and support of my husband and children, I don't think I would have the drive to do all that I do. As a family, we work hard to survive and advance!"

