

# CONTRIBUTOR OF NOTE

## Susan Velasco

By Roxanna Erickson Klein

Dallas Texas

Susan Velasco, business manager of the Milton H. Erickson Foundation, has shown a landmark meeting can be presented gracefully and seamlessly. Velasco manages each small detail with the finesse of an orchestra conductor directing a symphony. At appropriate times different members of the orchestra emerge as soloists, then quietly step back to feature others. The orchestra is keenly aware of the conductor, but the audience may scarcely recognize the presence of this key member. Indeed, the better the conductor, the less visible she is.

Early in her college years, Velasco had an ambition to become a high school counselor, but her plan was set aside when she married and spent 27 years in Mexico City. While raising her children, she received a teaching certificate from Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico and spent 14 years teaching English. Her long-term interests in both counseling and in education are still strong, and are factor that make her such a good fit for the Foundation. Velasco became part of the Foundation staff in October of 1995, two months prior to the Las Vegas Evolution Conference.

Starting as an administrative assistant she took on the responsibility of handling continuing education needs. That task turned out to be formidable and expansive, becoming a focus for years following the conference. With the success of that meeting, and learning from behind-the-scenes problem solving, the team emerged with a desire to work closely together so that each could supplement the needs of other staff members – a philosophy that prevails today. Velasco states that the team at the Milton H. Erickson works with the viewpoint that, "You get back what you give". This ideology encourages cooperative effort and individual responsibility.

Upon the conclusion of the Anaheim Evolution of Psychotherapy Conference held in May 2000, the Foundation's long-time executive director, Linda Carr-McThrall,

retired. Amid economic conditions that had compromised profit margins necessitating a reduction in staff, Velasco proposed to the Board of Directors that the important work of the Foundation could continue even with cutbacks and a tight budget.

Rising to the challenge with the help of an abbreviated staff, Velasco managed a couples conferences demonstrating that close attention to detail can be accomplished even in times of financial uncertainty. The conference was wonderfully received and added significantly to the positive momentum that continues to propel the Foundation.

Velasco remarked that she was particularly pleased with this success because she knew that couples, families and children would benefit from the excellent teaching provided. She reflected: "Couples and families are the basis of our society, and to know we have made a positive impact is so rewarding".

Velasco explained her perception of work at the Foundation: "It is easy to get bogged down in day-to-day details --- but when we start to feel that way we stand back and reflect for a moment on how so many parts come together. That is what this work is all about --- education for the benefit of others."

Velasco dreams that some day the Milton H. Erickson Foundation will offer a comfortable setting for students and professionals to come and study in an ongoing flexible and intensive manner: "The Foundation is superlative in the quality of our educational programs but we still have tremendous needs in terms of archival preservation, development and outreach. When our resources are offered in ways that are more accessible and more meaningful to those who wish to study them, we can become a premier destination."

Psychotherapy affects not only the person who studies and learns but it reaches a much larger group. In Velasco's words "It makes me so proud and happy to be a small part of the teaching that brings positive growth in ways that we can only begin to imagine."

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