

# Watsonville women have a champion at Cabrillo

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STAFF WRITER

Shirley Flores-Munoz may have won the prestigious Women in Education award, but the real winners, she said, are a handful of Watsonville Latina women who struggle against great odds to educate themselves.

Munoz, 42, who has worked for the Women's Center at Cabrillo College since 1986, received the award last weekend in Los Angeles at the annual California Federation of Teachers convention. Her award was mostly in recognition of a job-training program for women she helped establish at Cabrillo in the fall. The program is funded by a \$53,000 federal grant from the Vocational Training in Education Act.

Flores-Munoz recruited women from the Watsonville area to train in traditionally male-dominated careers such as law enforcement, industrial trades and firefighting. Last semester, 24 women ranging in age from 18 to 42 were recruited from Watsonville. Half are single mothers. This semester, 18 women are still in the program.

It is this group of women that Flores-Munoz thinks are the true heroines.

Eleanor Alonso, for example, is a single mother with two children. Because she doesn't have a car, Alonso spends several hours a day on the bus to and from school and taking the chil-

dren to day care.

Another is Yolanda Esquivel, a woman in her 40s with four children. Esquivel is studying to be a welder, a career choice her family doesn't quite understand or fully accept.

"Her (family) says, 'Why are you going into welding? There are only men in that field,'" Flores-Munoz said.

Flores-Munoz first came to Cabrillo in 1981 as a part-time instructor of women's studies. In 1986, she started working with the Women's Center. She put together a women's re-entry program and began to recruit Latinas from South County. Since then, the number of Latinas at Cabrillo has gone from 250 to more than 1,100, she said.

"I have a commitment to Watsonville women," she said. "I have a big commitment to them."

Flores-Munoz' roots are in Watsonville. She was born and raised here. Both her parents worked in the fields and food-processing plants in Watsonville.

After graduating from Watsonville High, she attended UC-Santa Cruz and received an undergraduate degree in history. She is currently a doctoral candidate in UCSC's History of Consciousness Department.

She plans to offer a class this summer titled "Women in Work." The course will not only discuss various careers available to women, but will also challenge racist and sexist attitudes in the work place. Also this summer, she will offer a



two-weekend seminar on June 20 and 27 called "Cultural Identity for Latinas."

"La Mujer," a class she has taught for several years at Cabrillo, examines contemporary women's issues through a wide variety of media. It also makes use of several field trips, including visits to San Francisco

museums, attendance at a Teatro Campesino play in San Juan Bautista and a UC-Santa Cruz tour.

"It's a real eye-opener for some of these women," she said. "For many, it's the first time away from home without children or boyfriends or husbands."

Latinas in Watsonville, she said, will continue to be her main interest in recruiting. Because of social and economic barriers that block their way, they are not the easiest group to get into school, she said. But that just makes the job more challenging. In one case, she worked with a Watsonville

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Kurt Ellison

woman for 10 years. That woman now attends Cabrillo College, she said.

Flores-Munoz sees Watsonville as a lawn and she the rake.

"When you rake the lawn, you may miss a few leaves," she said. "So you go over it again and get the ones you missed."