

*Is a Graduate of SMHS...*

## Reconnecting With Her San Marino Roots

"You've no idea how good the California sunshine feels after spending eight winters in Boston!" said Victoria Deise Wilson, a San Marino ex-patriot who returned to her San Gabriel Valley roots in 2001.

Sitting in her sun-filled office at The Alhambra, a one million square foot office campus in Alhambra which she oversees on behalf of The Ratkovich Company, Deise Wilson recalls her decision to return home after fifteen years away from her

family.

"Having been gone that long, it was an interesting experience to return to my childhood home as an adult."

A San Marino High School graduate, Deise Wilson went on to study at Stanford, from which she graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a Bachelor's degree in American Studies. After graduation, she worked at the Haas Center for

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Public Service on the Stanford campus, managing student volunteers in various civic and community endeavors.

"My interest has always been to make a difference in our society," Deise Wilson went on. "So after leaving the Haas Center, I joined a small San Francisco Bay Area non-profit called Bayshore Christian Ministries as its development director."

She left the Bay area in 1993 to take a job in Boston with a small but growing organization, City Year. "My assignment as national affairs director for City Year was to help guide the expansion of this youth service corps across the country. When I joined the organization it had 250 corps members in two cities. Today it has over 1,400 members active in 18 cities."

Deise Wilson discovered that real estate development had the potential to meet her career objectives of making a positive impact on the community through building projects that improve the quality of urban life. Her exploration led her to a small Boston based real estate company, MarketPlace Development.

"I applied for a job as an analyst with the company telling them I had absolutely no real estate background, but was eager to learn. They hired me, which was a courageous move on their part!"

Deise Wilson spent four and a half years with MarketPlace Development, overseeing the development of retail projects at airports including Philadelphia International and San Francisco International airports.

Tiring of the Boston winters and missing her family, Deise Wilson returned to San Marino in 2001. Upon her return, she reconnected with a family friend, Clare DeBriere, executive vice president and chief operating officer of The Ratkovich Company, a Los Angeles real estate development firm.

"The timing was perfect since Ratkovich was looking for a senior development manager at The Alhambra," she said. Deise Wilson took on The Alhambra assignment in October 2001. Since that time,



**VICTORIA D. WILSON**

she's been responsible for supervising the leasing of more than 450,000 square feet of office space, the development of 120,000 square feet of retail facilities adjacent to the campus.

"The Ratkovich Company has been a great fit for me," Deise Wilson continued.

Victoria continues to give back to her community, most recently completing a term as president of the Alhambra Chamber of Commerce. Founded in 1903, the Alhambra Chamber has grown to

be the largest by budget in the entire San Gabriel Valley and the 10th largest in Los Angeles County. "The Chamber has worked closely with city officials to revitalize Alhambra. Its membership, which continues to grow, reflects the dynamic diversity of this West San Gabriel Valley community which is attractive for a number of reasons, including its central location, quality of housing stock and excellent schools," she said.

From her experience as Alhambra Chamber president, Deise Wilson believes that the West San Gabriel Valley is somewhat insulated from the current economic woes affecting other Southland communities. "The area's Asian connection, particularly to mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, continues to attract capital somewhat off-setting the fall-out from disruptions in the real estate and financial sectors. In essence, the area seems to have its own micro economy which should help it maintain its economic vitality."

Deise Wilson left her family's house in 2002, purchasing her own home in Eagle Rock where she currently resides with her husband Peter and their two year old son, Harold.

