

Jessica Flores brought her zeal for civic involvement with her from her tiny Texas hometown

Family Tradition

STORY BY JANET PARMER
PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLIE GESELL

The grocery store owned by Jessica Flores' grandfather was the social epicenter of the tiny Texas town where she was raised and where her family was deeply involved in politics and community affairs.

When Flores moved to Santa Rosa 10 years ago, she naturally jumped into civic activism.

Flores, 37, is an attorney who runs the Family Law Facilitator/Self-Help Center at Sonoma County Superior Court. She also serves on the board of directors of three local nonprofit organizations, allowing her scant time to pursue her interest in training for sprint triathlons.

A son was born to her and her partner, Jeremy Foster, on Mother's Day, and Flores plans to return to work later in the summer and resume her high-energy level of community involvement.

Flores oversees a small Superior Court staff of lawyers, paralegals and administrative aides who do limited mediation and education on such topics as divorce, child custody, child support and landlord-tenant conflicts.

"It's really great work, but it sometimes can be overwhelming because of the volume. It's not an easy job. It's fast-paced and very satisfying, and at the end of the day you know you've done something to help people," said Flores.

"What I really like is that we help a lot



Attorney Jessica Flores serves on a variety of groups, from the California Parenting Institute to Listening For A Change, which seeks to educate about diversity.

of monolingual Spanish speakers who have less financial resources. There aren't enough Spanish-speaking family law attorneys," she said.

When she was asked to join the board of Listening For A Change, Flores was nervous and flattered, and worried that she didn't know many wealthy people she could ask to support the group.

The Santa Rosa-based group aims to educate about diversity, and it has devised school curriculum about human rights,

launched a community listening project and does cultural diversity training for businesses.

Flores also serves on the board of Recourse Mediation, a nonprofit group offering low-cost mediation. A year ago she joined the board of California Parenting Institute, which provides counseling and education for parents and children.

"They are all so different and interesting," said Flores. "It's a really good example to set by being involved."

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JESSICA FLORES, Family Law Facilitator / Self-Help Center