



**Marta Knight**  
**GSE Team Leader, 2009 to D4400**

GSE Team Leader Marta Knight, has been in Rotary for the past 7 years. She served as President of the Chula Vista Sunrise Club in 2008-2009. She is a graduate of the Rotary Leadership and Development Academy, has served as a facilitator for RYLA, Club Membership Chair, Member of the District Strategic Planning Team, and is currently serving as District International Service Chair and is Assistant Governor for 2009-2010.

Marta visited Ecuador, with a group of Rotarians representing 12 Clubs of District 5340 in October 2008. While in Ecuador, she visited several Clubs, current and future Matching Grant projects from our District, as well as International Project Fair for District 4400, in Manta, Ecuador.

Marta was born and raised in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. She is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Rotarian, with her Grandfather being a founding member of the Mazatlan, Sinaloa Rotary Club. Her father, Dr. Adalberto Rojo, was a member of the Tijuana Rotary Club for 47 years. He was District Governor twice and represented the President of Rotary International at several District Conferences in the world of Rotary.

Marta is currently Branch Manager of Prospect Mortgage in Chula Vista. She is Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural and Bi-literate in Spanish. Her 20 year career as a Loan Officer has been in the South Bay area of San Diego County, helping Hispanic families achieve the Dream of Homeownership. Her Branch has been the San Diego Region's #1, Multi-Cultural Branch.

Marta is involved in her community as member of Chula Vista Chamber of Commerce, National Assn. of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals, and National Assn. of Professional Mortgage Women, Pacific Southwest Assn. of Realtors, Mentor for Castle Park High School and is Past President of the San Diego County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Marta is married to Bill Knight. They have 4 children and 2 grand children.



**Madeline A. Ramirez**  
**GSE Team member 2009 to D4400**

Madeline has been an educator with the Oceanside Unified School District for twenty three years. She has taught primarily second language learners in grades kindergarten through third. She has taught at four diverse schools within Oceanside City including one on the Marine Base at Camp Pendleton. Additionally, Madeline has taught a course, “Spanish for Educators” offered through an extension program of Loyola Marymount University.

During the academic year, Madeline has taken groups of students to participate in local running events in the community. She has also involved her class with beach clean-ups and the Recycle and Conservation Fair in the city of Oceanside. This 2009 school year her class will focus on fund raising to assist impoverished international schools.

Madeline is actively involved in grant writing projects which has benefited school-wide projects. Grants from the Jordan Foundation, Oceanside Chamber of Commerce and San Diego Agriculture in the Classroom, to name a few have supported the establishment of a school garden, numerous field trips, and educational assemblies. She was the recipient of the Target Store Scholarship in 1999 and completed a National Teaching Board Certificate program in 2006. Her involvement with professional associations include membership and speaking engagements with the California Kindergarten Association, Professional Development Federation, and the Alumni Educational Association of Loyola Marymount University.

Madeline received her Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles in 1985. She spent six months in Spain during her Junior year at St. Luis University in Madrid. In 1986 she received a Bilingual/Cross Cultural teaching credential with a Spanish emphasis. She continued her post-graduate studies by receiving her Masters of Art degree in Education from San Diego State University with a focus on Language Arts and Literacy.

Madeline lives in Carlsbad with her husband Joe and their three children ages 14, 16 and 18. They have

been married for twenty three years and enjoy frequent travel outside of the country with their children. Madeline is an avid runner and has completed four marathons around the country and is currently training for the Carlsbad Marathon in January 2010.



**Rachel Tarshes,  
GSE Team Member 2009 to D4400**

Rachael is a first time participant in a Rotary Club Exchange, but is not a newcomer to educational work in other countries. Her first experience was back in 2002 when she went to Outback Queensland for 3 months to learn about the different education systems in Australia. Rachael also worked for a year in the rural southeast of China teaching English to future English teachers. In the fall of 2007, Rachael was fortunate enough to travel to Egypt with People to People International for a worldwide education and cultural exchange.

Rachael attended undergraduate and graduate schooling at the University of Washington in Seattle. After earning a BS in Biology and completing a Masters in Teaching, she worked for a year substituting in Seattle-area schools. Feeling the need for a change of scenery, Rachael moved to Harlem New York and taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade science for a year in the Bronx. In true nomadic spirit, she moved further east to China where she taught advanced English courses at a small college and a US History and culture to the top high school students in her city. She discovered the world is truly small when she was told her high school students were working at a sister high school right outside Seattle! Completing her eastern trek, Rachael came full circle and settled in San Diego in August of 2008.

Currently, Rachael is preparing for her second year of teaching at Horace Mann Middle School in the San Diego Unified School District as an 8<sup>th</sup> grade Physical Science teacher. Rachael has also just begun working on her educational doctorate at Argosy University.

Previous travels have lead Rachael to Costa Rica, Germany, China, Japan, and Egypt. After her trip to Ecuador, she has plans in the works to go to Greece and Mexico and wherever else the winds might take her.



**Sherrilynn Polanco**  
**GSE Team Member, 2009 to D4400**

Sherrilynn is the Lead Teacher at Borrego Springs Elementary School. In addition to her leadership duties, she teaches full-time in a second grade Dual-Immersion classroom. The class uses a two-way immersion model: students from Spanish-dominant and English-dominant homes work together to acquire each other's languages. The goals of the program are high academic achievement in both languages, biliteracy/bilingualism, and multicultural competency for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She has just started work on a certificate in Translation and Interpretation at UCSD Extension.

She was born in East Africa to parents doing short-term missionary work and was raised in the heart of Silicon Valley. Frequent trips to California beaches and mountains during childhood gave her a love of both swimming and hiking which persist to this day. Trips she, her father and sisters have recently completed include hiking a 40-mile loop of the John Muir trail in Yosemite's High Sierra and river rafting down the Grand Canyon portion of the Colorado River. On any given weekend, she can often be found enjoying family time with her parents and sisters, who have all relocated to San Diego County.

Sherrilynn earned a degree in Anthropology from UC Santa Cruz, learning Spanish during her studies as well. After college, Sherrilynn spent three years teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to the children of migrant farmworkers in Salinas, CA. The fog of the Salinas Valley eventually drove her to seek a sunnier climate in southern California. She probably couldn't have found a place offering much more sun than her current home of Borrego Springs, a small rural village surrounded by the immense Anza Borrego Desert State Park. Recently named an International Dark Sky Community, Borrego Springs offers unparalleled stargazing and an austere natural beauty. Sherrilynn, her husband Maui and their four teenagers (affectionately known by friends as 'Team Polanco') enjoy the calm, relaxed pace and friendliness of their sleepy town, not to mention the mild winters!

She has served as the teacher liaison to the Site Council of her Elementary School as well as on several District Committees, including the Budget and Insurance committees. She currently serves as a Board Member on both the local branch of the Friends of the Library and the Borrego Springs Little League.

She is the Treasurer and Membership Chair of her District's Education Association and is active in her church. Most recently she accompanied 10 youth on a service trip to South Los Angeles.

Sherrilynn is grateful for and honored by the opportunity to learn more about her profession by visiting colleagues in Ecuador. She is proud to represent Borrego Springs and San Diego County and is excited to participate in Rotary's mission of cultural and professional exchange.



**Heather Wolzen**  
**GSE Team Member 2009 to D4400**

Heather currently divides her time teaching at two primary schools, Dehesa Elementary and Academia Excelencia y Justicia en Educacion (EJE), working with students from kindergarten through sixth grade. She earned her degree in Language Studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz, and spent a year studying at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in the Distrito Federal. Following her graduation, she taught English Literature to seventh- and eighth-graders in Mexico City, and also developed and taught courses in English and Feminism at the Universidad Intercontinental in Mexico City.

Heather has traveled through Europe, Mexico and Central America, and holds a special fondness for Latin American art and cuisine. In her quest to learn more about the creators of the work she admires, she has hiked into small Guatemalan villages to watch weavers at their looms, ridden miles by bus and by burro to arrive at Xalitla to see the painters of Amate bark in Guerrero, and wandered countless street markets enjoying the handiwork of local artisans. She has volunteered in local schools as an art docent for seven years, introducing students to the beauty of paintings by Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and Rufino Tamayo, helping to guide her students in finding the joy of self-expression through art. Heather was born and raised in San Diego, California. She and her husband have two teenage daughters; together, their family has been building their own home, room-by-room, over the past several years. Not only have they developed minor skills in construction and painting, but they have also learned to appreciate the many imperfections which make each home –and each family- unique. It has always been a dream of Heather’s to travel to South America, and she is honored to be a part of the GSE team in Ecuador and take part in the Rotary Club’s work towards building a common ground for goodwill and peace in the world.