



RAICES DE MEXICO

Ballet Folklorico 804 Bell Street East Palo Alto, Ca. 94303
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HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION

Nine years ago, an ambitious political science graduate from Berkeley decided that he wanted to do something significant for the East Palo Alto community where he lived. Ruben Avelar wanted to keep alive his Mexican ancestral roots by teaching his folkloric knowledge to the youth of the community. This, he decided, was better than politics! Consequently, "RAICES DE MEXICO" was born.

Entering its ninth year, Raices de Mexico is now a non-profit corporation. Raices has donated its services to entertain senior citizens and war veterans. The group has conducted fundraisers and participated in community functions such as parades, grand openings and school celebrations. Raices de Mexico has presented shows around the Bay Area, from Mt. Diablo and San Francisco to San Jose.

The group's objective is to grow, improve and continue enhancing the community by presenting cultural programming of exceptional quality through Mexican music and dance, as well as educating each dancer about Mexican music folklore.

After the terrible earthquake in September of 1985 which left thousands homeless in Mexico City, Raices de Mexico participated with the Redwood City Mexican American community, in conjunction with Pete's Harbor, in a massive fundraiser for the victims of this calamity. Also, Raices sponsored two fundraisers of their own, one with Stanford University and the other at the Sunnyvale Community Center. Both of these events were highly successful and Raices de Mexico was able to donate \$931.06 to the Red Cross for use in the relief effort.

For four consecutive years from 1981-85, Raices de Mexico performed at the University of California Cinco de Mayo celebrations held at the Greek Theater in Berkeley, as well as for the Medical School at San Francisco State University, and both primary and secondary schools around the Bay Area.

Students at Raices de Mexico are exposed to a variety of dances from major regions of Mexico. Through the dance classes, they develop their coordination, musical aptitude, stage presence, and self-esteem. Working in a group situation also enhances artistic character building and leadership qualities. The group consists of children ranging in age from 5 to 12 years, and young adults from age 13 and older.

As the group's first instructor/choreographer, Ruben Avelar had been dancing most of his life. What was once a childhood hobby became a community project. Ruben had received his dance instruction from Los Lupeños de San Jose as well as Dr. Susan Cashion, Director of Dance for Stanford University.

The Board of Directors of Raices de Mexico are parents and members of the community who, in addition to their planning and organizational duties, encourage the dancers,

provide transportation to performances and assist in all group activities. Raices is not just dancing. Members also participate in group activities such as potlucks, holiday parties, and conferences. The group believes that along with hard work there must be time for leisure as well. Raices is funded by membership dues, performance fees, and contributions from private and public sources.

Future plans include expanding into surrounding communities, acquiring material for new dances from additional regions, maintaining a high level of performance quality for the group as a whole, and increasing Raices' membership.