



Rising Star Award



This year's Rising Star Award has been earned by an individual who has chosen to follow her passion for advancing opportunities for underrepresented populations to enter into non-traditional careers. As a highly talented, hardworking, and innovative individual, Ms. Perez could have chosen any career path, but she has chosen to support members of her community who face economic hardship on a daily basis. As a child growing up exposed to poverty, Yvonne Perez became acutely aware of how poverty affects people's lives and their communities. Rather than let it defeat her, however, Ms. Perez's experiences served to motivate her to excel in her academic endeavors and to use her education and experiences to improve the lives of others still facing economic hardship, particularly among Latinos and within rural communities.

An Idaho native, Ms. Perez graduated from Idaho State University (ISU) in 2007 with a B.S. in political science and a minor in Spanish. In 2009, upon obtaining a Master's in Public Administration from ISU, Ms. Perez, with her sensitivity for understanding the Latino family dynamic, served with AmeriCops as a VISTA volunteer. During that time, she worked through the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to establish KinCare—a support group for grandparents raising their grandchildren.

In 2010, Ms. Perez joined the Idaho Career Pioneer Network as a facilitator, providing nontraditional career information to high school and undergraduate students, and particularly females, to help them understand the connection between their potential and the career choices they may have never considered. With her guidance, students explore careers that can build their social mobility and break through the confines of poverty. Ms. Perez also chairs the Latino Economic and Development Center, an organization that assists Latino business entrepreneurs with expert tools to develop new or expand existing businesses. In this role, she contributes to strengthening the economy of eastern Idaho and the Latino community. Ms. Perez aided in establishing LEAD's bilingual computer lab, which was designed to instruct Latino business owners in the latest business software and teach the general community about financial literacy. Ms. Perez hopes to obtain her J.D. with an emphasis on immigration law, to further serve the needs of the Hispanic population of Idaho.

Ms. Perez's commitment to community development, social justice, and the welfare of low-income and minority families makes Ms. Perez NAPE's first Rising Star Award winner, and a model for those to come.