

## Lizette Valarino



Born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, Lizette Valarino pursued a college education in Spain, Puerto Rico and Venezuela, completing her degree in Elementary Education in Caracas, Venezuela.

A resident of Orange County since 1987, she has worked closely with the Hispanic community through the years, serving as Associate Editor of a local Spanish-language newspaper and freelance writer for different publications in Central Florida.

For over a decade, she served as Special Assistant to Orange County Mayors Mel Martinez and Richard T. Crotty, where she focused on community affairs, serving as a liaison with various community organizations and as special liaison to the Hispanic community. She worked diligently to stimulate the participation of Orange County residents in the affairs of local government and assisted in community projects, also serving as the Mayor's spokesperson with the Spanish media, supervising the county's volunteer Spanish Translation Team and developing special projects for the office.

A resident of Orange County since 1987, she has worked closely with the Hispanic community for the past 20 years. Previous to working at the county, she served as Associate Editor of a local Spanish-language newspaper and as a freelance writer for different publications in Central Florida. While serving under Mayor Mel Martinez, she founded the Hispanic Heritage Celebration Committee of Orange County, an organization of Hispanic county employees, with the purpose of celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month. The committee's activities have been extremely popular throughout the years. In the year 2000, she founded the *Hispanic Heritage Scholarship Fund of Metro Orlando*, which was established as a 501-c-3 non profit organization in 2003. She is currently the Executive Director of this organization which to date has awarded over \$500,000 to 154 students in the Central Florida area.

Although enthusiastic about issues concerning Hispanics, women and children, Lizette's true passion is in the arts. As Associate Editor of Latino Internacional Newspaper from 1992-1995, she developed and wrote the Cultural Section of the publication, visiting various arts organizations seeking Hispanic artists whom she would feature periodically, as well as writing reviews and critiques on local artistic performances and presentations. As a volunteer, she has organized events for local arts organizations, seeking to maintain interest and motivation for the arts within the Hispanic community. She is currently a member of The Circle, a volunteer group to support and promote the future Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. She is also an active member of Friends of Orlando Ballet and chaired the *¡BAILAMOS! Planning Committee* for the past two years.

Lizette has been married for 35 years to Fremio Valarino. They have a son, Jean-Paul, a Staff Sergeant with the U.S. Air Force, and daughter, Alejandra, who works for the Chicago Lyric Opera. They are the proud grandparents of Britnie, Elena and Masion.

## **Volunteer Activities:**

American Red Cross (*Public Relations, Youth Corps Parents Advisory Council*)  
Venezuelan Association of Central Florida (*Secretary, Editor of newsletter*)  
Spanish Heritage Foundation for the Arts (*Public Relations*)  
OCPS Committee for Hispanic Cultural Awareness Month  
Bach Festival Children's Choir (*Public Relations 94-95*)  
Winter Park High School Choral Boosters (*Vice President, Public Relations 96-99*)  
Hispanic Professional and Businesswomen's Association (*President 98-99, 01-02*)  
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (*Vice-Chair 01-02, 02-03; Director 00-01*)  
Hispanic Business Initiative Fund (*Board member 00-04; Secretary 2005-2008*)  
COMPACT (*Board member 01-05*)  
Orange County Community Alliance for Children and Families (*Member-at-large*)  
Women's Resource Center (*Vice President 02-03, 03-04; Public Relations 02-04*)  
Hispanic Heritage Celebration Committee of Orange County (*President 99-02*)  
Hispanic Heritage Scholarship Gala (*Chairperson 01-04*)  
Hispanic Heritage Scholarship Fund (*Executive Director – Founder 2000-present*)  
Orlando Ballet – Friends of Orlando Ballet (*Chair, ¡BAILAMOS! Planning Committee*)  
Orlando Opera (*Ex officio Board member*)  
Maitland Art Center (*Board of Trustees*)  
The Circle (*Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts*)  
Charter Review Committee (*Appointed by Mayor Teresa Jacobs*)

## **Awards Received**

*Éxitos de lo Nuestro Award* (Business) Univision, 1999  
*Juan Ponce de León Award* for Community Service, Puerto Rican Parade, 1999  
*Hometown Hero*, Star 96.5, 1999  
*Héroes Hispanos Award* Finalist, Telemundo-Channel 40, 2000  
*Women who mean Business* – Nominee - Orlando Business Journal, 2001 & 2002  
*Simon Bolívar Award* - Community Service, Colombian Association, 2001  
*Team of the Quarter Award* - "Spanish on the Website", Orange County, 2001  
*Guest of Honor Award* for Community Service, Asociación Borinqueña, 1999 & 2002  
*Women of Magic Award* – Nominee – Orlando Sentinel, 2002 & 2003  
*Paoli Awards*– Outstanding Public Service in Government – 2004  
*Women who Make a Difference Award* – Public Service Category – La Prensa 2008  
*Local Hero Passion Beyond Paycheck*- Bank of America Neighborhood Excellence '08  
*Top 25 Most Influential Hispanics in Central Florida* – Ahora Magazine, 2009  
*State of Florida "Points of Light" Award* – 2009  
*Orlando Magic "Magic Maker"* - 2009  
*Don Quixote Excellence Award Nominee* – 2009  
*Don Quixote Excellence Award Nominee* – 2010