



IPS Spotlight:

IPS Community Organizer Leads in Civic Engagement



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The Institute for Public Strategies has long employed community leaders who promote community transformation. **Stelle Andrade** is a community organizer. She works on several projects in San Diego County's South Bay and excels as both a youth advocate and marketing professional. Stelle was selected in 2020 to serve as a member of the City of Chula Vista Redistricting Commission and as a member of the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee for the Sweetwater Union High School District. *This conversation with her has been edited for clarity.*

What are some of your accomplishments outside of IPS?

I was an election site manager for the San Diego County Register of Voters for the 2020 General Presidential Election. That was really cool because I was more than just a poll worker. I served as a poll worker in March 2020 and I had a fun time. I applied for the manager position, went in for an interview and I got it.

It was temporary, but I learned more about how to lead a team. And though it was a bit intimidating at times because I am a young woman who was leading a team of professionals much older than me, I got to know everyone and learned that we were all a great team together. It didn't hurt that they all thought I was doing a great job as a leader. Being as young as me working the polls is not very common. I felt amazing after that experience.

I was also selected as the youngest member of the board of the City of Chula Vista Redistricting Commission. I was thrilled to be chosen, mainly because the Commission wanted to stress the importance of representation. They wanted to bring everyone's voice to the table. Not just the communities of color but also people of different ages. This type of inclusion is vital to me, so I am excited to sit on that Commission. I was attracted to the position because it had a component that involved community organizing and outreach, which is something I do professionally for IPS. The Commission wants to hear from constituents about what redistricting is and why it's crucial to our democracy. That sort of outreach is my motivating force.

I am also one of the youngest members of the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee for the Sweetwater Union High School District in the South Bay. I find it interesting because the committee's work is uncharted territory for me. We discuss the school district's funds and how to properly and responsibly manage them. I don't have a strong knowledge in that area. But I have some basic knowledge that I learned as a Political Science and International Affairs major in college.

Can you tell us what motivates you to be so civically engaged?

At a young age I always wanted to be involved in the community. When I was little, I would say that I wanted to be a lawyer when I grew up so that I could help the little guy. Then I wanted to

be a teacher so that I could teach students to be doctors and help people. I have always had the idea that I wanted to help. I helped my mom with Sunday school. I was also very active in community service. Reflecting on it now, I think it's funny because I wish I also did sports in high school. I couldn't do sports because my dad worked a full-time job and could not pick me up from the practices. Or we couldn't afford the expenses of joining a school team. So I participated in the free clubs on campus. That helped me to get more involved with my community. I think that has a lot to do with my work at IPS and my work in the City of Chula Vista.

What quality do you most appreciate in yourself?

I like to be a learner. I've heard that it's always great to be a lifelong learner. And it doesn't have to be at the academic level. It could be through life experiences and relationships. I love this concept, and I've adapted it to my life. Like with my Commission work - I'm not super familiar with some of the topics we discuss, but I want to learn more about them and see how I can help. I bring that quality to everything I approach in life.

What part of your work is most meaningful or rewarding?

Working with IPS South Bay is probably one of the most meaningful things in my life because it allows me to give back to the community that gave me so much. I grew up in Chula Vista, so the South Bay is my home. To be able to have my voice heard as a community member and organizer while also uplifting my neighbors' voices is extremely rewarding. It's great to see my community taking a direction. I like meeting new people and community leaders who become allies of the community's progress. I am glad to be on the IPS South Bay team. More than that, I am thankful that IPS covers the South Bay.