

'A learning experience'

De La Rosa watches, listens and reacts as her community grows

By **JANICE AUSTIN**
For The Salinas Californian

Soledad City Councilwoman Stephanie De La Rosa said she considers listening to be a non-stop, pivotal part of her elected office, and she heard one need loud and clear: child care.

The council listened to the community, De La Rosa said, and the result was a new contract with Children's Services International to establish a 100-percent-subsidized child-care center in Soledad.

"To me, that's just a stepping stone," she said. "I would like to see more child care for all income levels."

The center will likely open early next year, De La Rosa said.

Three years ago, she began her first term on the City Council. De La Rosa said she's found it educational and fulfilling.

"Sometimes in your life things cross your path, and they either pass you by or the little red flag goes up and you take an interest in it," she said. "Three years ago Soledad was growing pretty quickly and there were opportunities for some new opinions and new voices.

"It's definitely been a learning experience to see how politics and bureaucracy work and how things tick and the processes that need to be followed."

'It means being involved'

De La Rosa's responsibilities include going to council meetings and being part of other community committees that are assigned by the mayor.

"It means being involved in the community," she said, "and knowing what the pulse of the community is, knowing what the constituents want — whether it be housing, grocery stores or activities." Soledad's population has



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Stephanie De La Rosa, shown Nov. 24 in her Soledad home, joined the Soledad City Council in 2002.

doubled in the past five years.

"We've grown so quickly that we've outgrown our services," De La Rosa said. "I'd like to see us be able to grow in a way that the whole community can grow together — not just putting houses on land, but making sure that our city services are in line with the amount of growth that we have.

"Making sure that we have fire and police protection, and that we have enough water and waste water facilities."

And, she said, Soledad needs more job opportunities along with housing and commercial growth so fewer residents will need to commute to Salinas.

A focus on programs for teens

Providing more youth recreation is another important goal, De La Rosa said.

"In the future I'd like to see more activities, whether that means a new community center or expanding on what we already have," she said. "We've

STEPHANIE DE LA ROSA

n **AGE:** 37

n **POSITION:** Member of Soledad City Council since 2002.

n **JOB:** Registered nurse, supervisor for labor and delivery department at Natividad Medical Center for 7½ years.

n **EDUCATION:** Bachelor's degree in nursing, University of California, Santa Cruz.

n **PERSONAL:** Lives in Soledad with her husband, Hector, who is the city's assistant city manager. The couple have two children, Gabriel, 4, and Alyssa, 7.

'We have a huge community that loves to work together.'

— **Stephanie De La Rosa,**
Soledad City Councilwoman

had talk of putting a theater in, something to give our teenagers more opportunities."

De La Rosa cites being able to talk with others in Soledad as one of the most enjoyable aspects of her work on the council.

"We have a huge community that loves to work together," she said. "I love when I see people on the street that I may not know, but they approach me and feel comfortable telling me what they'd like to see in town or what they see as an obstacle. We can make a difference if we all work together."

When she's not working in her job as a nurse at Natividad Medical Center in Salinas, De La Rosa said, she enjoys spending time with her 4-year-old son, Gabriel, and 7-year-old daughter, Alyssa.

"My children are my inspiration," she said. "I want them to grow up loving their small town.

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