

**Debra Ramirez-Cruz**  
Getting to know your  
Grand President 2024-2025

Debra Ann Ramirez was born in Salinas, CA on January 31, 1964. Evangeline, her mom raised three children Debra was the middle child and the only girl of her siblings. While her mom worked Debra helped to keep her older brother Daniel and younger brother David looked after. At the time her brothers grew to depend on Debra to help to be organize with their chores and prepare meals to eat while Mom was away at work.

As a young girl Debra had quite an imagination, she would spend her time organizing the neighborhood kids to put on puppet shows charging a penny for a dixie cup of popcorn, a toothpick icee, and a chance to sit and watch her well-organized creative puppet show performance.

Debra worked hard at everything she did, including at the age of 8 becoming the first “girl” newspaper route carrier in the city. At the time the paper route belonged to her older brother until one day her brother who wanted to hang out with his friends decided to convince Debra to do his route for him. Before too long Debra was folding new papers and tossing them into yards with very little effort. Many who saw her thought she was just another boy on a bike with a paper route until one day a local news reporter hollered at her to take a picture as her long hair that was tucked into her brother’s bowered baseball cap fell out. The next day the local newspaper headline read “News Paper Routes are not just for Boys Anymore”.

In grade school Debra joined the school choral program, and when that was not enough decided to join the school band. One day Debra asked her mom if she could play the Saxophone as an instrument, not being able to afford this her mom reached out to Debra’s uncle who played the Trumpet in the military, and gave Debra his instrument to play, she was off to embed herself into learning to play this wonderful brass beauty. Debra’s love for music has carried forward even until today.

Through school, Debra would organize students in various ways such as Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, singing in the school Library, and International cultural days for the younger grades. She promoted involvement in learning about culture including learning to make and cook homemade tortillas. She was a crossing guard and raised the United States Flag at the school flagpole every morning during the pledge of allegiance. Debra earned many pins and awards as part of her busy and involved participation. In Jr. High School, Debra’s favorite subjects were home economics and drama.

Debra met her husband Samuel at a very young age during grade school, at the time Debra was not very interested in him. Soon that quickly changed, and the two became one. Together they raised four daughters Louisa, Malinda, Christina, and Victoria. Samuel worked tirelessly for long hours to keep the costs of their household funded, while Debra cared for the girls. Debra once again used her creativity to organize a plan to return to school securing her GED and an Administrative Assistance Certificate in Business.

Debra joined #85 Ignatius in October 2006, to satisfy a request from her mom, Evangeline. At the time Debra was not very active, but during a convention in Concord, CA, Debra’s Mom called Debra on a Friday evening to see if she was available to attend a dinner, it turned out the dinner was candidates’ night. Debra thought it was very odd to arrive and see grown women marching around chanting and in various costumes, with an added surprise to see her mom dressed as “Strawberry Shortcake” wearing bloomers. It would not be long after that Debra returned to her youthful days of creativity and organizing that she too would be hooked.

Debra loved organizing and staying behind the scenes, she especially admired Grand Installation. In 2013 Debra served as Installing Marshal and was honored with placing the regalia on her mom as she was installed as Grand President. Debra would attend every Grand Institute with her mom afterwards and in 2017 Debra decided to run for Grand Marshall. Debra’s campaign theme was dressing as the Madhatter with the theme “Madly in Love with YLI”. Fun fact during Covid Debra was a contestant on “Let’s Make a Deal” virtually wearing her Madhatter outfit and was selected for a quick prize of \$400.

When Debra was approached to go up the chairs Debra’s response was always “When my mom says I am ready and gives her permission”. In 2022 at the March board meeting, Debra announced her intention to run for Grand Second Vice President and showed the little white paper with written permission from her mom. On July 17, 2024, Debra was installed as Grand President in the presence of her Past Grand President Mom Evangeline Plaskett, her family, her YLI sister members, and guests, making history of becoming the first mother-daughter Grand presidents.

Debra’s Grand President’s program is “The Power and Glory of Music and her love for Young Ladies’ Grand Institute is enthusiastic and infectious with an abundance of energy for the new year. Debra has 14 Anniversaries that she is honored to have on her official visit calendar. Debra will travel with her mom as her health permits and her husband Samuel.