

Young Founder of Mi Casa de Angeles Speaks to Rotary Club of Goleta

High school senior Gabriella Brignardello an example of how one person can make a difference

By Lynn Cederquist for the Rotary Club of Goleta | Published on 04.11.2012



Rotary Club of Goleta President Martin Senn welcomes guest speaker Gabriella Brignardello, founder of the nonprofit Mi Casa de Angeles. (Rotary Club of Goleta photo)

The [Rotary Club of Goleta](#) had a special treat Tuesday night with a presentation by [La Reina High School](#) senior and [Interact Club](#) member Gabriella Brignardello of Thousand Oaks.

She is the founder of [Mi Casa de Angeles](#), a nonprofit organization to improve education in Peru's poverty stricken areas. Simply an amazing story of how one person can make a difference, she was only 10 years old when the idea came to her.

After hearing Brignardello's story, the Rotary Club of Goleta decided to make a \$1,000 donation to Mi Casa de Angeles.

Brignardello's mother is from Ascot, England, and her father is from Lima, Peru. Since birth, Brignardello and her family have made annual visits to Peru, keeping strong ties and relationships with her other family members and the Peruvian culture. From an early age, Brignardello has felt a deep connection to her Peruvian heritage.

On Christmas Eve 2004, after attending Mass at the Santa Maria Chapel in Lima, several young children, begging for money and food, surrounded Brignardello on the church steps. Knowing that she was now going to return to a warm family home with a delicious Christmas feast and lots of presents, Brignardello was struck with emotions of sadness and guilt. She asked her father, with tears brimming in her eyes, "How could I be so lucky and these kids have nothing?" That moment planted the seed of her quest to make a difference in the lives of needy children in Peru.

In November 2009, Brignardello founded the 501(c)3 nonprofit organization Mi Casa de Angeles, with the mission of building schools and supporting a higher quality of education in impoverished areas throughout Peru, thereby empowering the children with knowledge and improving their lives so that they can have a better opportunity to succeed in society. To date, the nonprofit has raised more than \$48,000 through the 1STEP Shoes business (hand-painted by Brignardello and personalized canvas shoes with all profits going to the foundation) as well as through several local fundraising events, a movie night, a fashion show and three garage/parking lot sales.

Brignardello is also a commissioner on the [Thousand Oaks Youth Commission](#), a youth advisory board to the [City Council](#). She has not only expanded the guest-speaking program, but also recently hosted and moderated the first Night of Networking, which was a successful networking event that more than 100 high school juniors and seniors as well as local college students participated in with the intent of gaining insight from local companies' human resources representatives about their respective businesses and industries.

Brignardello is also very involved with several local Rotary clubs, [Rotary International](#) and the Interact Club at her high school.

The Rotary Club of Goleta meets at 6:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at [Elephant Bar](#), 521 Firestone Road. The public is always welcome to enjoy camaraderie, dinner, interesting speakers and share interest in community service

[Click here for more information](#) about the Rotary Club of Goleta, or contact membership chairwoman Frances Gilliland at franeg@msn.com or Senn at franeg@msn.com.

— Lynn Cederquist is publicity chairwoman of the [Rotary Club of Goleta](#).