



Metissa Arias

Working with the future leaders of Las Vegas

elissa Arias, executive director of Epicurean Charitable Foundation. has a passion to better the community of Las

Vegas starting with its future leaders. ECF awards college scholarships to local Clark County students who otherwise may not even attend college and provides each recipient with a mentor from the ECF board for the duration of his or her education.

"I have seen firsthand the effect that ECF has on local students. Our scholarship recipients are from a variety of backgrounds-from being temporarily homeless, to having to care for two siblings at the age of 14-but all share one thing in common. They are passionate about a career in hospitality, but lack the financial means to do so on their own. ECF opens the door to possibility and provides invaluable guidance along the way," Arias explained.

As part of the Future Leaders of Hospitality Program, the mentors provide students with academic assistance, personal guidance and professional experience. Arias oversees every donation and fundraising event that makes the scholarships possible.

It was a different path that brought Arias to ECF. "Cancer has heavily infiltrated my family. I hope my children will be fortunate enough to grow up in a time in which cancer is not only treatable, but curable, and I am an advocate to find a cure. Living so far from family, I looked for an outlet to become more involved in my community and began volunteering, which brought me to the nonprofit sector. After initially serving as a volunteer for the American Cancer Society, I was offered a job and turned my passion into a profession."

She has been living in Las Vegas for nearly a decade and is proud to call the Silver State her home. Arias has a number of mentors, "As the executive director of Epicurean Charitable Foundation of Las Vegas, I am honored to work with 25 of the most respected

hospitality and food and beverage leaders in the industry who make up the ECF board. These dedicated men and women find time in their overwhelming schedules to support the foundation's charitable mission and serve as mentors for our city's future industry leaders. They are not just mentors for our students, but for myself as well."

For inspiration, Arias explained, "My younger brother's life was turned upside down when he was diagnosed with cardio-myopathy and is currently waiting for a heart transplant. His strength and determination is my inspiration, professionally and personally, to never give up and to appreciate every moment. Life is a precious gift."

In addition to her full-time job as executive director of Epicurean Charitable Foundation, she actively participates in charity runs throughout the year, benefitting organizations such as Susan G. Komen of Southern Nevada and Opportunity Village. Arias also support other organizations and programs such as Catholic Charities, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Shade Tree, Keep Memory Alive Foundation, American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society. In 2009, she founded the Young Professionals Against Cancer events so that Clark County's aspiring young people could join in efforts to fight cancer.

In her personal life, Arias said, "I have been married to my best friend and soul mate John for more than five years and we have a beautiful. energetic one-year-old daughter named Savannah. I love that every moment I spend with her is a new adventure. The best part of being a mother, in my opinion, is that with young children, every moment, their eyes light up with every new discovery. From figuring out how to sound out words, to mastering that a new gymnastics obstacle, to just playing in the house-everything is done with innocence and a sense of awe." Arias truly demonstrates being a Fearless Female. Lww

