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WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Growing Roots Jennifer Perez

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Jennifer Perez celebrates a decade in business this year as the owner of the indoor plantscaping franchise Growing Roots, LLC. She expanded the business and has franchises in La Jolla and Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Exploring her roots, Perez recalled that her grandparents on both sides of her family, originally from Puerto Rico, were farmers. "Growing up, they always had beautiful gardens, and always had beautiful indoor plants," Perez said. "[Gardening] was something I always did with my grandparents and, as I got older, I would do my own gardening and have my own plants inside my own home. It was just a hobby, like it is to so many other people."

That hobby helped lead her to indoor plantscaping. "I love the fact that we are bringing nature indoors and beautifying indoor spaces; it's healthy," Perez said. "Plants are indoor air filters. They are working 24 hours a day, pulling all of those toxins into the leaves and breaking them down to turn them into food and then releasing clean oxygen. They also help stabilize humidity levels indoors, in the same way."

Growing Roots provides sales, leasing, design, installation and maintenance of indoor plants and accessories like containers and water features, as well as some container gardening and patioscaping, for both residential and commercial clients. Growing Roots serves clients from San Juan Capistrano up to Pasadena, with the bulk of the business-to-business networking referrals happening in Long Beach.

With the economy today, a lot of people are cutting back on expenses, Perez said, so her biggest challenge is changing the perception that having indoor plants is a luxury. "I want people to look at it as a health benefit because it does work for you. A lot of people will switch to silk plants and artificial plants. Really, those are just dust collectors."

Perez is a member of the Long Beach Executives, the U.S. Green Building Council's Long Beach chapter and the Sustainable Business Council of Los Angeles. Her business was the first indoor plant company in California to become green certified through the state's program that recognizes businesses that operate in an environmentally-friendly manner. ■