

# Up Front

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## **Laura Olguin**

is the owner and operator of what is now the fourth-largest Jack in the Box franchise in the nation. Photo by Kris Hanning.

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# A Well Managed Life

**"I HAVE ALWAYS HAD A STRONG DESIRE TO SUCCEED,"** says Laura Olguin, owner and CEO of CRT Partners, the Southern Arizona franchise for Jack in the Box. "I always knew I would get somewhere — I just wasn't sure where. But I knew I would be successful." Born and raised in Mexico City, "I was a precocious child," Olguin says with a smile. "In 1978, we moved to the United States because my mom wanted us to have an American education." She ended up graduating from high school in El Paso, Texas, at the tender age of 15 and a half.

After high school graduation, Olguin moved to Hollywood to follow her dream of becoming an actress. "I saw the musical *Mame* in Mexico City when I was about six or seven and was inspired." While pursuing a degree at California State University at Long Beach, she began working for Jack in the Box. Originally, the job was just a way to put herself through college and help support her mother, grandmother and

siblings. Little did she know it would eventually become her career.

Hard work and dedication led to rapid advancement with the company, as Olguin went from shift leader to assistant manager, and finally to restaurant manager and area manager. Along the way, she graduated with a degree in psychology from California State University, and an MBA from Pepperdine University. In 1993 she was promoted to Director of International Franchising, reporting to the company's CEO.

She left Jack in the Box for five years to work with Pepsi Co. and Huffey Corporation. "However, those jobs resulted in my traveling too much," she says. In 2000, she returned to Jack in the Box as an equity partner with CRT Partners in Tucson. In May 2004, she became the owner and operator of what is now the fourth largest Jack in the Box franchise in the nation.

"Jack in the Box has been with me through every stage of my life; it has been

an integral part of my life in a positive way. I now own 27 restaurants under one partnership in Tucson, and I have five (soon to be seven) in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with a different partner. As owner/CEO, I am responsible for most everything: restaurant development, marketing, legal issues, human resources, training, banking relations and operations. Due to the economy and minimum wage requirements, it is a lot tougher to stay profitable these days."

She develops her restaurants from scratch — that includes finding the sites, building the restaurants and hiring the employees. Her typical workday involves numerous meetings as well as "solving the crisis of the day. As long as you have desire, you can accomplish anything. I live by the motto 'every problem has a solution.'"

Despite the fact she runs two companies, Olguin finds time to contribute to the community. "I served as the past board president of Wingspan, and I am on the board of the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. I also am on the board of Girls Inc. and St. Francis in the Foothills United Methodist Church. Our recent community involvement at CRT Partners includes the Children's Miracle Network at Tucson Medical Center, MDA, the Community Food Bank and Big Brothers/Big Sisters."

Olguin and her partner Maria De Lourdes Saavedra have a total of three children and a boxer mix named Angel. "People may be surprised to learn I am a very good salsa dancer," she says. "I learned to salsa dance in the last six years or so and try to go out dancing about once a week." She and her family also enjoy going to movies, Broadway shows and amusement parks. "I spent 20 years living in Southern California, and we enjoy going there for vacations."

One of her proudest accomplishments was being named the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Businesswoman of the Year in 2007. "I'm also very proud of my kids and getting my master's degree," she says. A current goal is to earn a Ph.D. "I have a passion for psychology, but I will probably get my Ph.D. in business," she states. She also plans to continue to expand her restaurants in both Tucson and Albuquerque. It looks like she is following her own advice: "Set the goal in front of you and go after it!" — *Wendy Sweet*



Laura Olguin, owner and CEO of CRT Partners. Photo by Kris Hanning.