



Photo by Ryan Taylor

**I**t takes about 30 seconds to catch the enthusiasm epidemic Luz Robles spreads around. Give her 30 seconds more, and her knowledge and abilities will captivate you. It's hard to know which is more impressive, Robles' knowledge or abilities, but one thing's for sure—together they are an amazing combination.

As the director of the Zions Bank Business Resource Center and a Utah State Senator, Robles juggles her responsibilities like a pro and finds that her life in the private and public sector compliment each other in ways she would have never expected.

After graduating with a master's degree in public administration from the University of Utah, Robles went to work

## Luz Robles

Focusing on the Community

*By Hilary Ingoldsby Whitesides*

at Pioneer Valley Hospital as an advocate for domestic abuse victims. At that time, she was also leading the State Office of Ethnic Affairs as division director. In these roles, Robles says she learned much about health care, business, the executive branch of government and policy.

In 2007, Robles returned to the private sector. Because of her extreme commitment to the community, leaving the State Office of Ethnic Affairs for Zions Bank's Business Resource Center seemed like a strange move, but Robles says it was a move that she's never regretted. Today, each experience she's had has led her to better understanding the challenges Utahns are facing.

"It's going to take a partnership of the private sector and the public sector to help families be more successful and have a better quality of life, so for me it's a great fit," Robles says. "My work here at Zions Bank really ties back to what I do as a senator—which is to focus on what makes the economy stronger. When more than 95 percent of businesses in Utah are small businesses, I can go back as a senator and truly talk about what people are facing as barriers because my work gives me such a broad perspective."

Robles takes her constituents' concerns to the legislative floor and drafts policy she hopes will make a difference. At the Business Resource Center, Robles interacts daily on a one-on-one basis with Utah entrepreneurs and business owners. The center provides a computer lab for public use and houses SCORE, a program that provides free advice from retired CEOs and CFOs.

"It's truly a very rewarding experience," Robles says, adding that what has always impressed her most about Zions Bank is its commitment to community.

With the economic struggles caused by the recession, Robles says more people are taking advantage of the services offered at the center. She adds that she's excited to see more unemployed Utahns finding the courage to follow their entrepreneurial spirit. And she's willing to give the extra help and advice they need to make their business financially viable during this financially challenging time.

"[My] doors are open to anyone who has a question about business," Robles says. **UB**