

## **Biography of Officer Israel Gomez, Jr.**

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Israel Gomez, Jr. was raised in Laredo, Texas and served four years in the United States Navy. In 1981, Israel joined the Houston Police Department and has worked different assignments within the department. He has four children, Becky, Gabriel, Jackie and Israel, III.

Israel is very active in several other organizations including the Texas Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run, the National Latino Peace Officers Association, the Houston Police Organization of Spanish Speaking Officers, and the Houston Police Hispanic Officer of the Year, Inc. Committee. He has also been a volunteer for the Houston Livestock and Rodeo Show and has served as a counselor at Anytown's yearly camp. Additionally, he is a past Scoutmaster of a Boy Scout Troop. He is a member of St. Matthews Catholic Church and of the Knights of Columbus at St. Matthews.

Israel's commitment to help under privileged children was realized while he was assigned to Ripley House Police Community Office in 1987. While there, the Rainbo Baking Company made a \$5,000.00 contribution and asked that Ripley House host a party for children. Little did Israel know that the party would be the beginning of what is now Navidad En El Barrio.

One of Israel's dreams was to take Navidad En El Barrio to his hometown, Laredo, Texas. That was accomplished with the help of Sheriff Juan Garza, who accepted to host the first Navidad En El Barrio in 1998. It has now become a yearly event for approximately 750 students.

Israel's dreams and efforts made it possible that the first Navidad En El Barrio take place in San Antonio in 2001.

While Israel is active in different organizations locally and nationally, Navidad En El Barrio takes precedence in his life. He feels that with Navidad En El Barrio he is answering God's call to help those in need. He realizes that without the Lord's guiding hand, the assistance and support of family and friends, this would not have been possible.

Israel has always instilled in his children the importance of helping those less fortunate, and is proud of the fact that his children have always participated in

Navidad En El Barrio's programs and activities.

Israel is optimistic, and hopes that for many years to come, he will continue to touch the lives of those in need and put smiles on children and people who might otherwise have lost hope.