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## 2004 AWARD WINNER PROFILES



### Cynthia A. Villis

*Director, Institute of College Initiatives  
University of San Diego*

Dr. Cynthia Villis has been a university administrator and higher education activist for 25 years. She has been with the University of San Diego for the past 17 years where she has served as a dean, an associate provost and now a director of an institute, which she founded. One of Cynthia's greatest gifts is to identify and nurture the potential between USD and the great-

er San Diego community. She makes the university environment especially inviting to students, their families and those who wish to make the academic dreams of others into a reality.

As the first in her family to graduate from college, Cynthia is an advocate for first generation students and those from low-income backgrounds. Among those whom she has introduced to USD are students from refugee families, including the Lost Boys of Sudan.

A Rotarian since 1997, Cynthia focuses the same trademark intensity and energy to outreach through her La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club (LJGTRC). She is President Elect 2005-06, and since 2001 has co-chaired its International Service Committee. She is also a member of the Club's board of directors and its Vocational Service Committee, and was secretary for three years. Cynthia is also a Paul Harris Fellow. She writes matching grant proposals for LJGTRC projects, such as for the Esperanza International medical clinic in Tijuana, consults with a Somali Sewing Center in City Heights that she played a role in founding, brings Preuss School students to USD for leadership training, and co-chairs a highly innovative District Pathways to Peace Committee.

## Women Who Mean Business Special Awards

### Courage Award

#### Rachel Robinson

Rachel Robinson's recently published book, "Without My Mother's Love," is an autobiographical account of what one woman endured and overcame to become an inspiration to everyone whose life she touches today. By writing her autobiography detailing the horrific abuses and injustices she overcame in her young life, she has given hope and strength to others to overcome difficulties in their own lives.

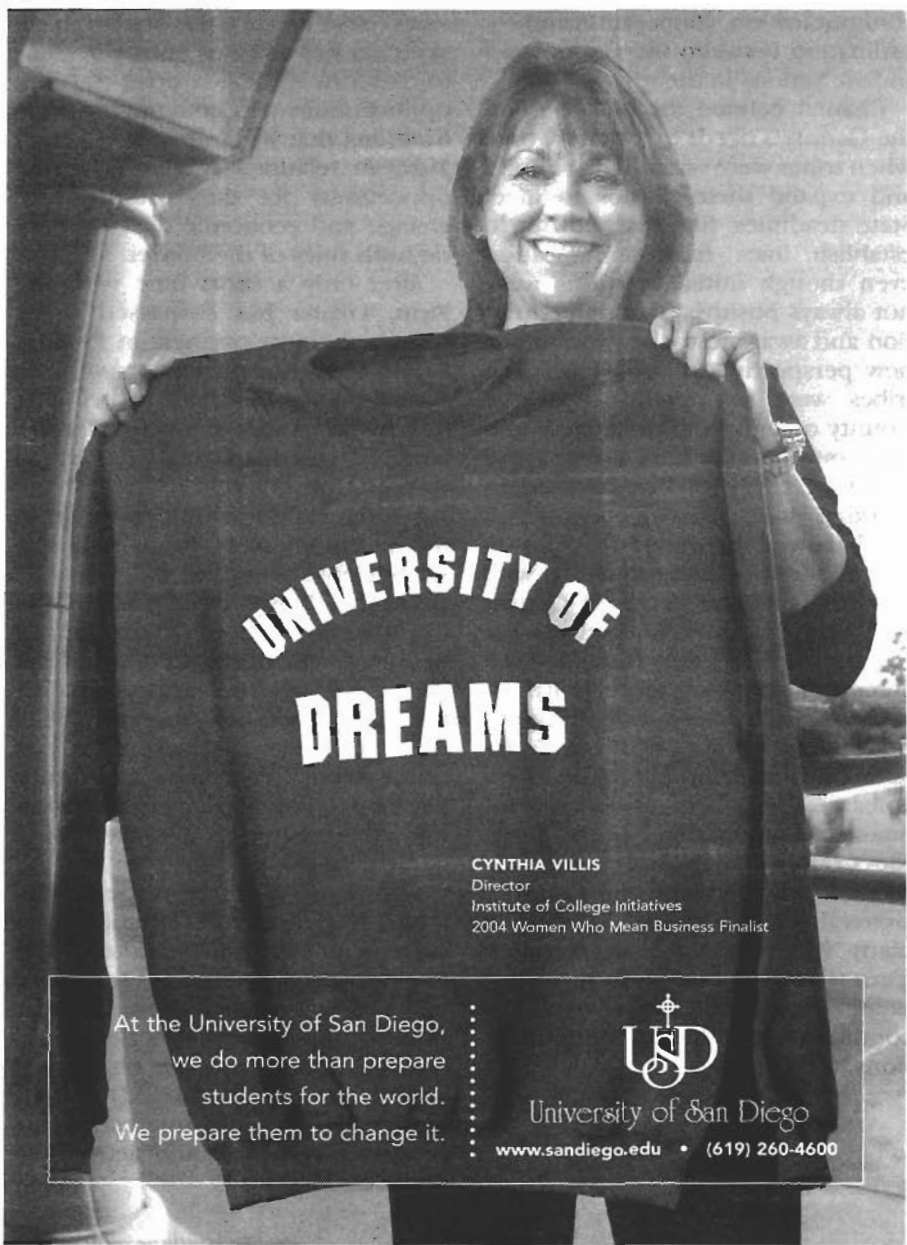
Rachel works two jobs. One at Curves, where she motivates other women to use their inner strength to work out and eat healthier to feel

better about themselves. She herself has lost more than 80 lbs. and continues on her quest to help other women help themselves.

She also works for SEEDS, a non-profit organization that assists the mentally and physically disabled to become better educated about sex abuse prevention. And she mentors foster children as well in the Foster Mentor Youth Program in San Diego.

As difficult as it was for Rachel to write her life story of years of physical and mental cruelty and abuses, she wrote her story of strength and endurance to empower others.

*Special Awards continued on Page A22*



**UNIVERSITY OF  
DREAMS**

**CYNTHIA VILLIS**  
Director  
Institute of College Initiatives  
2004 Women Who Mean Business Finalist

At the University of San Diego,  
we do more than prepare  
students for the world.  
We prepare them to change it.



University of San Diego

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