

# FORWARD MOMENTUM

**IPI Chair Liliana Rambo, CAPP,  
outlines her goals and aspirations  
for her two-year tenure.**

**By Kim Fernandez**

**D**on't tell anyone, but newly-elected IPI Chair Liliana Rambo, CAPP, fell into parking because she wanted a space, well, for free.

A student at Miami-Dade Community College-Downtown Campus in 1987, Rambo was chatting with a friend who worked as a cashier in the garage nearest the administrative offices, and the friend asked if Rambo might like a cashiering job too. "I thought this would be very convenient," says Rambo. "I could go to school and then go to work without moving my vehicle, plus I would get free parking!"

She applied for the job, took the required math test, and was immediately bumped up to an accounting clerk position. And that, as they say, was how Rambo became a parking professional.

Rambo is no stranger to IPI members. She earned her Certified Administrator of Public Parking (CAPP) certification in 2001 and has served on the executive board for the past five years. She's also no stranger to the challenges and rewards parking professionals face at all levels of their careers, having worked her way up from that first parking accounting clerk position to parking director for the Houston Airports System, with stints as parking

director for on-street parking for Houston; parking services director in Hollywood, Fla.; and director of off-street facilities in Miami along the way. She's also the mom of two teenage girls, an avid exerciser, a dancer, and scrapbooker who works hard to maintain a healthy work-life balance, and a longtime board member and current president of the Texas Parking and Transportation Association. It sounds exhausting, but she says she wouldn't have it any other way.

### The Industry

"I feel very blessed to have a job where every day is different," she says. "I am never bored and I get the opportunity to interact with many different people at all different levels."

She says her love of parking is centered in the diversity the industry offers its professionals. "I get involved with diverse projects," she says. "This has allowed me the opportunity to learn a little bit about many different fields, including financing, budgeting, project management, construction, marketing, technology, legislature, operations, human resources, and the list goes on and on."

Rambo says she places a lot of value in the time and interest given to her by several industry mentors when she started out in a career she never envisioned for herself. Like many other parking professionals, she says having seasoned professionals willing to work with and teach her made a huge difference.

"Karen Wilson was the deputy director for the Miami Parking Authority," she says. "When I met Karen, I was working as a purchasing clerk for the authority. I knew I wanted to get involved in the operations, and she found a way to get me involved. I started working on special projects for her in addition to my regular purchasing duties."

Wilson also made sure she learned about other aspects of the industry as well. "She assigned me to a parking garage as an interim garage manager so I could learn



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### IPI

"IPI went through some very similar transitions," says Rambo, noting the name change from Institutional and Municipal Parking Congress (IMPC) and embracing transparent business practices. "We went from being just another parking organization to being the premier parking organization."

Other things have evolved as well, she says. "The relationships I have formed and maintained over the years are priceless. Some of my best friends are also parking professionals and people who have been with me during my best and worst times. Parking people are the funniest, friendliest people to be around."

Becoming an IPI volunteer and active member, she says, was instrumental to her career. "Volunteering and being part of the IPI community has allowed me the opportunity to meet, network, and learn from other colleagues. It has allowed me the flexibility to call upon many people when I need help with a project, program, or problem."

the ropes of the off-street side, and she was very valuable showing me the political side of parking," taking the young employee to meetings at City Hall, with civic associations, and with people with whom she'd work years later.

Looking back, Rambo notes a lot of change that's transformed the industry in a relatively short amount of time.

"The industry has gone from having very manual and time-consuming ways of doing business to one where information is available at the click of a button," she says. "I can still remember the days of running a special event from an apron full of cash and a handful of manual tickets. Today, that same event is run using one handheld to print a ticket and process a credit card payment!"

IPI has also changed, she says, growing and evolving into the industry's preeminent organization.

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She's also proud of her years on the Board of Directors and the strides made by the organization in that time.

"The priorities and growth have all stemmed from having the right people doing the right jobs and placing a higher urgency and priority on making sure everyone knows the importance of parking and transportation professionals," she says. "The growth has come from getting our voice and message out. IPI has separated itself from other industry organizations by providing the best member services, education, and networking opportunities."

### Looking Ahead

After many years as an active IPI member, Rambo has developed clear priorities for her two-year term as chair. First on that list is continuing the association's membership growth across all industry segments.

"I think that even greater growth of our membership will come as a byproduct of the work we are doing with other parts of the industry," she says. "The marketing of what a parking professional is and his or her importance will keep resonating with municipalities, airports, hospitals, and universities, and as a result, more and more people working in the field will get involved with IPI."

Rambo also hopes to see parking introduced to the curricula of colleges and universities as its own specialty and not as part of another program. "We've just got to keep knocking on universities' doors," she says. "Hopefully, we will find a couple of professors who are engaged and believe that parking should be a subject all by itself"

Her third priority, she says, is to continue growing international outreach and participation.

"I think we already have a good start with IPI's International Parking Conference, and I hope to keep growing the exposure of this annual event," she says. "I would like to see more articles in *The Parking Professional* that are written by international members and spotlight their projects. I would also like to take advantage of the time our international members spend with us during the IPI Conference & Expo, and increase their engagement."

"The expansion into Latin America and the outreach to parking professionals in those countries made a lot of sense," she says of IPI's proactive measures to expand in that part of the world. "The parking operators, vendors, and others involved in the parking industry there

are looking for the same things we're looking for: they want to learn about the latest technologies and trends; they want to meet their counterparts in the U.S.; and they want to be part of the organization that is shaping parking and transportation, just like we do."

The movement, she says, is valuable for everyone. "IPI's involvement should continue and grow," she explains. "We have many U.S. companies that do business in Latin America, and they recognize that this is a market that is still in its infancy as it relates to on-street parking. Once they on-street shift occurs, the opportunities for all will be amazing."

### Proud Mama

When Rambo's not strategizing for IPI or running things back in Houston, she's focused on home and family. Her daughters, 17-year-old Briana Nicole and 15-year-old Diana Marie "keep me busy with school or other activities," she says. "Diana plays competitive volleyball so that keeps me going quite a bit. This will be Briana's last year in high school, so we will be busy choosing schools and making this very important transition in our lives."

Keeping a tight schedule and working out regularly, she says, keeps her balanced. "I truly drive myself and my team from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday," she says. "Our goals are always ambitious and we are always busy and on the go."

These days, she's likely to be the mentor for new parking professionals, and she offers them her best advice. "Learn as much as you can about parking and the operation," she says. "This can't be done from a desk. To know, speak, and understand parking, you must know your operation better than the line staff out in the field. My other advice is to become involved in IPI and state or regional associations. They will provide you with the resources you need to meet people in the industry."

And that, she says, is critical. "Parking professionals do not work in a vacuum," she says. "We rely on many other industries and definitely on many government agencies and entities to get our work done. By getting the *Parking Matters*® message out, we are placing the parking professional on people's minds. Our hope is to secure a seat at the table and be sure we are thought of when projects are being planned, not when they're being finished. We will accomplish this by strengthening relationships." **P**



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