

# History-making councilman opens doors

By **PASCALE ETHEART**  
Herald Staff Writer

Six months after his election as the first Mexican-American councilman in Homestead, Eddie Berrones is right where he wants to be.

"It has been fantastic. I have enjoyed every minute of it," he said.

Berrones, the youngest of 12 children born of former migrant farmworkers, moved with his family from Texas to South Dade while only a few months old. He later went away to college, but always kept his home base in Homestead and Florida City.

Being an advocate for his

community is something he would do no matter what, said Berrones, director of a series of day-care centers. His current title just makes it a little easier: "I do it because in my heart, I want to help people."

One way Berrones wants to empower the community is through the city's new Hispanic Advisory Board. The group, recently created by Mayor Steve Shiver, will be made up of Homestead residents and business owners to represent the Hispanic community.

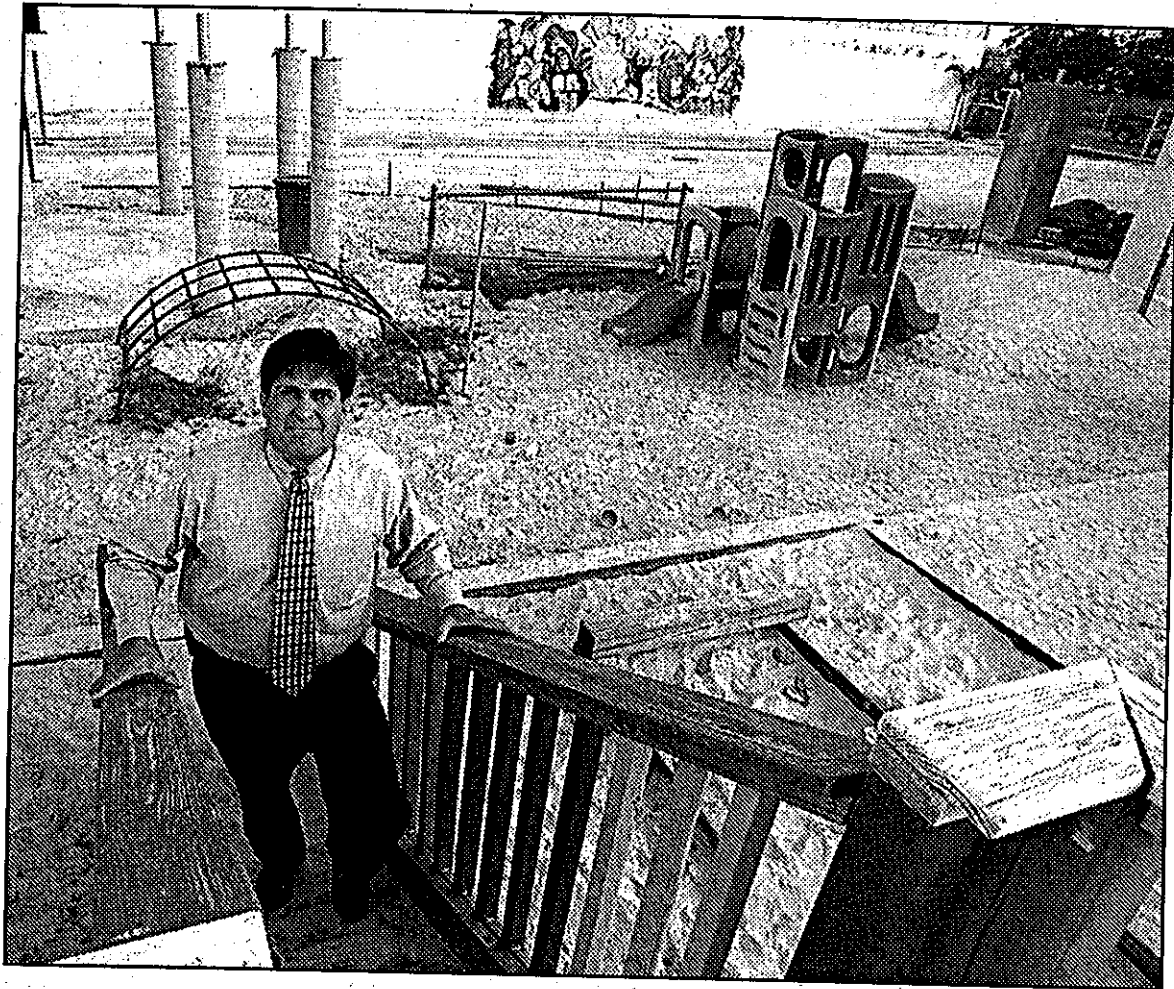
"We can't continue doing business the way we have done for these communities," Berrones said. "Isolation. Providing handouts. Absolutely not."

For Juanita Mainster, a long-time community leader in South Dade's farmworker community, having Berrones on the City Council is a triumph.

"He is a very good role model for the young people in the community," said Mainster, who also has Mexican roots.

Mexican-Americans and farmworkers in general should become part of the greater community, Mainster said. Berrones's presence on the City Council serves as another step in that direction.

"We may be tomato pickers. We may be migrants. We may be farmworkers, but we are



**KEEPING KIDS IN MIND:** Homestead Councilman Eddie Berrones is also executive director of the Le Jardin day-care center for low-income families.

RAUL RUBIERA / Herald Staff

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