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Profile: Richard Kiy

## Local resident makes a difference helping donors safely channel charitable contributions abroad

By Arthur Lightbourn



Richard Kiy  
Photo/Jon Clark

Richard Kiy (pronounced "K-eye") will soon be recognized and honored as an "eagle" at the seventh annual Dos Aguilas/Two Eagles Binational Fiesta on Friday, March 6, at the San Diego Natural History Museum.

The museum fundraising fiesta each year honors two people who have contributed significantly to cross-border cooperation and environmental understanding.

Kiy, 46, president and CEO of the San Diego-based International Community Foundation (ICF), will share to "eagle" honors with Enrique Gamboa Núñez, president of the Boys and Girls Club of Mexico.

The ICF, established in 1990, is a nonprofit public charity dedicated to increasing charitable giving and volunteerism across U.S. borders.

Since taking over the helm of the ICF in 2001, Kiy has helped the Foundation grow to more than \$12 million in assets and has made grants totaling more than \$21 million to nonprofits and other charitable causes primarily in Mexico, but also in Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Argentina, Peru, Canada and China.

Over the past year, the Foundation awarded 86 grants totaling more than \$4.6 million to 51 nonprofit organizations. More than 95 percent of the grants are donor-advised, grants channeled to specific qualified nonprofits designated by donors.

"We're funding education, health, environmentally-related projects, arts, culture and community development," Kiy said.

Prior to joining the Foundation, Kiy had developed an extensive resume in both the U.S. government, specializing in environmental protection, health, and safety, and the private sector of international business.

He is the co-author of the book Environmental Management along North America's Borders and co-editor of The Ties that Bind Us: Mexican Migrants in San Diego County.

The ICF is headquartered in National City.

We interviewed Kiy on the patio of a local cafe on the afternoon of the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the U.S.

"I was very encouraged by the message that Obama has sent to Americans about our responsibility to

give back," Kiy said. "Our country is facing enormous challenges and we're all going to have to pitch in and make a difference..."

"There are a lot of ways people can contribute to make this country stronger. And one way is working with nonprofits. There are a multitude of nonprofits that people can get involved with. It's a matter of people searching their passions and interests and figuring out a way to channel some those interests and passions so they can make a difference."

The ICF assists U.S. donors to make tax deductible gifts to qualified nonprofits in the regions it serves by providing the due diligence and follow-up site visits to ensure that individuals, companies and family foundations wishing to give can do so legally while immediately helping the communities abroad that they care about.

Kiy is 5-foot-10, weighs a solid 185 pounds, has a full head of thick salt-and-pepper hair, and keeps in shape by ocean swimming regularly off Del Mar.

Kiy, who was born in San Diego, the middle child in a family of three boys. He is the proud son of immigrant parents. "I'm a half-breed like Obama," Kiy said. His father, a machinist, was born in England. His mother was born in Mexico.

Kiy, of course, is fluently bilingual, an asset that has stood him in good stead throughout his career.

He attended Crawford High School in east San Diego where he was on the swim and water polo teams. He is a graduate of Stanford University, A.B. in economics with an emphasis on natural resource economics, 1984; and Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government (MPA, 1986).

Kiy initially thought of becoming a marine biologist but while at Stanford he did an overseas study program in England studying the fishing policy of the European

### Quick Facts

Name: Richard Kiy

Distinction: Formerly in government service and the private sector, Kiy joined the nonprofit San Diego-based International Community Foundation in 2001 as president and CEO. He will be honored on March 6 at the San Diego Natural History Museum's seventh annual Dos Aguilas/Two Eagles Binational Fiesta for his contribution to cross-border cooperation and environmental understanding.

Born: San Diego 46 years ago

Education: AB. in economics with an emphasis on natural resource economics, Stanford University, 1984, and an MPA, Masters in Public Administration, 1986, from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government

Family: He and his wife, Monica (nee Gutierrez-Lam), have been married 14 years. They have two sons, Derek, 12, and Danny, 9.



Economic Community (EEC). "That switched my interest to the policy side of science," he said. After earning his master's degree, he worked as a development analyst for the London Docklands Development Corp. in London, England, and, in 1987, with the San Diego Economic Development Corporation responsible for attracting Japanese and Korean investment to the San Diego/Tijuana region.

"I've been working on border issues ever since," he said. "My interest in environment started because of all the work I was doing with the Economic Development Corporation; I started realizing some of the trans-boundary environmental issues that were occurring because of the waste that was being brought across the border from the manufacturing processes of many companies.

"I became very interested in the public policy aspects of hazardous waste management."

That realization led him to join the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

From 1991 to 1994, he served as Special Assistant for U.S.-Mexico Border Affairs at the EPA's Office of International Activities and Acting Environmental Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico.

His private sector experience includes serving as senior vice president of SAIC (Science Applications International Corp.) de Mexico, and director of environmental information systems with SAIC's Venezuelan-based subsidiary, INTESA; and later as vice president for Business Development for PriceSmart, Inc., helping the company with its expansion into Central America and the Caribbean.

In 1998, he returned to Washington, to serve as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Environmental Health & Safety at the Department of Energy.

Kiy acknowledges that drug-related violence in Tijuana is certainly affecting tourism to Mexico, but he believes the best way to address the drug problem and other critical issues in Mexico is to help them build a strong civil society.

For example, he said, in poor squatter communities in Baja California where both parents work full time to support their families and overcrowded schools operate in two shifts, children are often left to shift for themselves after school.

"Tijuana has over 200,000 latch-key kids," he said.

"So if you want to address some of the root causes of drug violence, one solution is to keep kids off the streets... The Boys and Girls Club of Mexico in Tijuana is providing an alternative place for kids to go after school... We take Boys and Girls Clubs in this country for granted, but in Mexico it's a relatively new thing and the club in Tijuana is the first of hopefully many more."

ICF donors support more than 50 Mexican community projects and nonprofits.

ICF donors include: New Americans: immigrants and first generation Americans with ties to communities abroad; Americans living abroad, an estimated 50,000 live in Mexico; U.S. companies committed to making a difference in overseas communities where they do business; and internationally-minded Americans with a passion and commitment to international community-based giving.

Despite the current economic recession which is affecting all charities including the ICF, Kiy remains optimistic about the future of giving and volunteerism.

"There are lots of ways to give.... I believe the emerging baby boom generation is this huge untapped potential that is just waiting to be unleashed, not just internationally but throughout the country. And I think that's what Obama was referring to when he talks about some of the opportunities for giving and making a difference."

Kiy volunteers as an assistant scout master with Troop 765 in Carmel Valley.

For more information on the Dos Aguilas Fiesta, visit [www.sdnhm.org](http://www.sdnhm.org). To reserve tickets, call 619-255-0188.

For more information on the International Community Foundation, visit [www.icfdn.org](http://www.icfdn.org)

