

March 28, 2015

Women quietly do extraordinary things every day. To help shed light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to history we are releasing an article every day in the month of March. These articles showcase how women have moved Indiana and our country forward and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives.

Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

Learn more:

- **U.S. Congressional Records**, "Honoring the Memory of Mrs. Victoria Soto Candelaria" (<http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?r108:2:./temp/~r108H12tAt:>)

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Women's History Month 2015

Telling 31 stories in 31 days this March.

Victoria Soto Candelaria (1939-2004)

Victoria Soto Candelaria was an educator who touched the lives of numerous students, both in and out of the classroom. She was a union leader, activist, and community advocate. In her years of teaching she touched many young minds. In 1997, Victoria was elected President of the Indiana Federation of Teachers and became the first Latina President of any statewide union in the United States.

Victoria Soto Candelaria was a child of Mexican immigrants. Her father, Lorenzo, was a steelworker who labored long hours to provide for his family. The youngest, Candelaria was the only woman in her family to attend college. After earning a bachelor's degree from Indiana University and a master's degree from Purdue University, she devoted twenty-nine years to the School City of East Chicago, teaching English and Spanish.

Candelaria strongly believed in the importance of community involvement as well as political activism. Her philosophy was grounded in three principles: (1) Learning; (2) Involvement and service to community; and (3) Living life with passion. She always felt that to change things you have to be involved. She was a member of the Indiana Governor's Roundtable on Education and a member of the Governor's Commission for Hispanic and Latino Affairs. She was a three time National Education Policy advisor to President Clinton. She was also one of the first Latinas honored with Indiana's highest civilian honor, the *Sagamore of the Wabash*, in 1997.

While her work in the educational and political fields placed extraordinary demands on her time, Candelaria always found time to spend with her most important interest – her family. By providing unwavering guidance to her children, she instilled in them the morals and fortitude that have molded them into successful adults who are raising their own families and who are all serving the community in one way or another.

Her son, Carlos, works with his local school district. Her son, Rey, has served as President of a national organization working in the U.S. and throughout the world to develop medications for the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Her daughter, Mara, became the first Latina lawmaker to be elected in Indiana History and served in the Indiana House of Representatives from 2007 to 2014. Her youngest son, Christian, works for a nonprofit organization, providing employment training to underserved communities in the Chicago area.

Victoria Soto Candelaria dedicated her life to educating the nation's youth and serving as a leader and role model for all Americans. Because of her lifetime work and achievements, Mrs. Candelaria has been lauded as a "tireless, passionate, and visionary advocate of the people".