

V I E W P O I

FROM THE SENATOR

Pagano is Woman of Distinction 2002

In celebration of Women's History Month, I am pleased to announce Theresa Pagano as 2002 "Woman of Distinction" for the 49th Senate District.

Theresa is a Syracuse Educator and pioneer of adult literacy and early childhood programs for non-English speaking families.

She is a most deserving recipient of this award, and I am proud that the state Senate will honor her for both her exceptional achievements, and for her many contributions to our community.

Theresa is an educator whose leadership in providing adult literacy and early childhood programs for the west side of Syracuse community marks her as a woman of distinction.

Theresa is honored for her work as the visionary director of the West Side Adult Learning Center and the "MANOS" Early Childhood & Family Center, both partnership projects of Partners in Learning, Inc., and the Syracuse City School District.

The programs first began to take shape when Theresa visited a Latino outreach program in Chicago, and was impressed with the

involvement of Latina women and children in language and literacy development. Theresa brought the program design back to Syracuse and began to investigate the need

for a similar program in the rapidly growing Latino community.

She discovered that in 1988, less than ten Latino children were involved in early childhood education programs in the community, and that Latino families lacked an awareness and understanding of the value of early childhood development due to the language barrier.

Taking up the challenge to overcome the language barrier and to bring educational resources to the community, Theresa established Partners in Learning, Inc., and in collaboration with the Syracuse City School District, opened the "MANOS" Early Childhood & Family Education Center.

The center began with three families, and today serves 45 families through expanded programming which includes a universal pre-kindergarten.

To better serve the community, Theresa broadened the original mission of the "MANOS" Pro-

gram to establish the West Side Adult Learning Center in 1992. The West Side Adult Learning Center provides training and education programs for non-English speaking adults, and for those native English speakers who face literacy challenges.

The center's focus on adult learning principles makes it a vital part of the community serving more than 400 learners across a variety of programs designed to assist participants in achieving their full potential.

The success of these innovative programs has been demonstrated through hundreds of ethno-linguistically diverse children and adults who have achieved their educational and employment goals, and become full participants in the fabric of our society.

My Senate majority colleagues and I are happy to honor Theresa Pagano, for she has exemplified personal excellence through her achievements. Theresa, by her perseverance, character, and integrity serves as an example to all New Yorkers. Theresa will be officially honored at a special ceremony and reception in Albany on May 21.

I would like to thank all who participated in the nomination process. We truly live in a society of caring individuals who believe that one person can make a difference in the lives of others.



BY
JOHN
DEFRANCISCO