



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Isabel E. Villar

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS May 13, 2013



Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

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Award: HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Year: 2013

Isabel E. Villar, a native of Cuba, immigrated to the United States with her family in 1966. She enrolled in White Plains High School and was immediately sensitized to the problems presented by the language barrier and the cultural differences experienced by newcomers to this country. Upon graduation from high school she was awarded a scholarship to Manhattanville College, where she received a B.A. in Political Science/Latin America Studies. She became a bilingual middle school teacher and then obtained her first master's degree through a New York University program in Spain.

Filled with a passion to learn, Ms. Villar went on to receive a Professional Diploma in School Administration (a second Master's) from Iona College and completed post-graduate studies (a third masters) at Long Island University in Dobbs Ferry, New York, with a license in counseling.

Dedicated to bettering the community around her, Ms. Villar co-founded El Centro Hispano in White Plains, New York, a community organization that offers a variety of social service programs to the Hispanic residents of White Plains and Westchester County. Since its inception 39 years ago El Centro Hispano has provided housing and employment information, workshops on parenting skills, a tutorial program at White Plains High School, outreach efforts, bilingual scout troops, a social service internship program and college scholarships for Hispanic high school graduates. More recently, El Centro Hispano has initiated the Mi Hermana Mayor Mentoring Program and built a state of the art technology center which offers computer classes for children, adults and seniors.

Ms. Villar has dedicated her time enhancing the lives of children and families through education, but her commitment far extends the classroom. She is a founder of the Westchester Hispanic Coalition, a member of the White Plains Board of Education, the White

Plains Human Rights Commission, the Community Development Advisory Board of the City of White Plains, the Westchester Hispanic Advisory Board, the White Plains High School Hall of Fame Selection Committee and the City of White Plains Comprehensive Plan Citizens' Committee, to name a few.

Because of her exemplary work, Ms. Villar is the recipient of numerous awards, including, but not limited to, the Statue of Liberty Award, Humanitarian of the Year Award; Teacher of the Year Award; Who's Who in America, the Connecticut Governor's Recognition Proclamation for 32 years of service to education; and was selected as one of the inaugural inductees into the White Plains High School Hall of Fame, the YWCA Hall of Fame and the Westchester Senior Citizens Hall of Fame.

Ms. Villar's commitment to families and children is truly inspiring. In June 2004, after 32 years in the Norwalk School System, she took early retirement to continue her commitment to help the growing Hispanic community as Executive Director of El Centro Hispano, Inc.