



2007 Alumni Honor Roll | Reasons to Believe



Role models who give us *Reasons to Believe* in the power of education

Tom A. Valverde

Argentine High School, 1971

Tom Valverde has always set high expectations for himself. This mindset has led him to achieve a number of successes throughout his life. Valverde is a department manager for Hall's. His dedication and strong work ethic has resulted in a 30-year career with this store which is a division of Hallmark Cards, Inc.

Valverde also has another job that he is passionate about. He is past president of the Hispanic AIDS Coalition of Greater Kansas City. He has spent more than two decades as an advocate voicing his concern for the Latino community in Kansas City and throughout the nation. He has been recognized with many awards for this work, including the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Health Award presented to him in Washington, D.C.



Valverde said he lost many close friends to AIDS in the 1980s and he was inspired to become involved in the cause on their behalf.

"I wanted to be a voice of advocacy for them – for the people who had passed and for those who live with the disease," he said.

Valverde is a volunteer for El Centro and the Children's Museum of KC. He is proud of his Hispanic heritage and in 1979, helped establish a scholarship program for youth through the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He currently serves on the Wyandotte County Library Board and Healthy Living Projects Board.

It was Valverde's high school French teacher, Rebecca Hays, who gave him reasons to believe in himself while growing up. An accident left Valverde with epilepsy and coping with the disorder was not easy. He was unsure about his future, especially college. But through Hays' support, he persevered. He graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in linguistics in 1976.

Valverde's advice for today's students is "find a passion and stick with it. Don't let small personal failures deter you from your goals."