



2008 Alumni Honor Roll | Reasons to Believe



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

John J. Mendez

Argentine High School, 1961

John Mendez is known throughout the community of Kansas City, Kansas for his work as a city leader and community activist.

He spent a large part of his career working for the city serving in positions including deputy city administrator and director of neighborhood and regional affairs. He may be most well known for the five years he served on the Board of Commissioners, representing the third district.

Mendez helped lead the charge to change from two community governments to one unified government in 1997. He also is credited with spearheading the Argentine Community Revitalization Project in 1972.



Growing up in the Argentine Community, Mendez has fond memories of his high school days playing basketball and running track. He said his experience with athletics taught him the importance of teamwork and perseverance. He is thankful for teachers like Doc Shell, who taught math and science, and motivated his students to learn. Mendez frequented Shell's classroom many mornings before school to get help on his math work. The support of his teachers and parents enabled him to succeed, and gave him reasons to believe in himself.

Though he was drafted after high school and spent two years with the Army, he never gave up his dream of college. He took advantage of the GI Bill and took night classes, earning his bachelor of science in public administration in 1976 from St. Mary College. He went on to earn his master's in liberal arts from Baker University in 1986.

Mendez formally retired in 2001, but remains busier than ever. He works part-time as an adjunct professor for Donnelly College, where he has been active on the Board of Trustees for more than 15 years. He also makes visits to KCK schools speaking to students about their futures, and encouraging them to continue their education.

His advice for today's students is "stay in school and continue learning."