



## 2008 Alumni Honor Roll | Reasons to Believe



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

**Carmen Ramirez Mott**

**Wyandotte High School, 1955**

Carmen Mott's life centers around communication. A tutor, translator and deaf interpreter, she has spent her life serving others, professionally and voluntarily.

Mott grew up in a family of nine children with Spanish as her native tongue. She remembers the feelings of isolation and frustration that her language barrier caused. Since her parents spoke very little English, they didn't attend school events, so she and her siblings learned to support each other.

Coming from a large family, college was not an option. Instead, she was encouraged to take secretarial classes during high school. These classes enabled her to land her first job after graduation.



She married in 1960, and was a stay-at-home mom to five children. She spent her free time volunteering at her children's school and interpreting for her Hispanic friends and neighbors.

Years later, when she reentered the work force, she landed a job as a Spanish interpreter at the University of Kansas Medical Center. It was there that she encountered a deaf boy whose Spanish-speaking parents had self-diagnosed him as learning disabled. Seeing Mott's patience and compassion with the boy, her supervisor convinced her to take college classes to become a deaf interpreter, and provided her with a stipend. It had been 25 years since high school so Mott thought she was incapable of returning to school after such a long time. But her supervisor gave her reasons to believe in herself.

Today, Mott is still helping people throughout her community of Erie, Kansas where she works as a part-time ESL tutor at the elementary school. She accompanies Spanish-speaking persons to doctor visits, hospital visits, school meetings and even to the police department to assist with communication.

Mott is a shining example of someone who has turned a barrier into a blessing, though she's modest about her selflessness.

"I have never felt like I am doing anything special," she said. "I'm just doing what comes natural to me."