

from the desk of Maribel Zubieta Diaz.....

I grew up believing all things are possible. My mother lived it, and I followed. The building we are in now is an example of our belief.

Conchita used to love to go for Sunday afternoon drives. After a leisurely lunch, we would get in the car and just drive. Some Sundays there was a specific destination; others not. On these drives she would share her thoughts, her dreams, her goals for creating the best possible place for her students.

On one of our Sunday drives we came west and passed a huge school building on a beautiful piece of land. Mami asked me to stop and we got out. "Some day this will be ours," she said to me. I laughed and told her the building wasn't even for sale. She just nodded and repeated, "Some day this will be ours." I can't tell you the number of times I drove past this building after that and continued to hear that repeating phrase, "some day this will be ours."

Several weeks past into months and one day in May she told me to ask about the building. We had a friend who was a realtor so I called and asked and much to my surprise found that the building was actually for sale but at a price we surely could not afford. This, of course, did not deter my mother. She had said it would be ours and she wouldn't let a little things like financing stand in her way. She had a goal, no matter how much too high others might have thought it to be, she knew it would happen. So I found a bank that would give us a loan and Atlantic Christian School (which owned the building) would give us a mortgage on the remainder. We went to the bank to sign the papers, and much to my surprise, they had changed the terms. It was not that we couldn't meet those terms; it was that changing the terms at such a late date created a cloud of distrust. So, my lawyer looked at me and said, "What do you want to do?" I looked at my mom, and she said, "Do what you think is right." And we got up and walked away.

Now we had already told our students we were moving, and we had no where to go. Was that cause for worry for my mother? Of course, not. She had set her goal. That afternoon at dismissal time, a mother, Ofelia Rodriguez-Arias, came to tell me how sorry she was that she hadn't talked to me earlier. She worked for Republic National Bank and they were opening a commercial division and were looking for solid institutions to create this department. Needless to say, I got my purse and went to the bank. The rest, as they say, is history.

Two months ago I made the decision to continue with the renovations and building plans for the school. We needed to come up with something that would bring our CEA family together in joy and enthusiasm to support the growing plans for the school. The #1 goal would be to have every member of the CEA family to become involved and fully participate in building for the future of our students. In order to accomplish this, the #2 goal came into play! Schools can't grow without money, and tuition doesn't cover major growth. So – Walk for the Future was born! When I announced 100% participation and \$100,000 goals, I was met with looks of disbelief, but I'm a very fortunate woman. I am loved, and I am trusted. So, even though it sounded crazy to many, we all joined forces.

Wonderful things began to happen. I started receiving emails and phone calls from parents offering ideas and help. Teachers and parents started planning activities – karaoke, battle of the bands, dance parties, movie nights, bake sales, basket and ticket raffles, etc. The school was buzzing with enthusiasm and a sense of pride.

Today we Walked for the Future. Today we surpassed our goals. Today every child and every family know that all things are possible.

Thank you!

Much love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mandel Gelfand". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name "Mandel Gelfand".