



Nancy Chavez  
*A Mother's*

On the morning of September 9, 2002, Nancy Chavez watched with pride and satisfaction as her daughter Randi walked down the aisle towards her groom and their future together as husband and wife. Like all mothers, Nancy wanted Randi to enjoy a peaceful, happy life, surrounded by family, friends, and love. Nancy's marriage had been a stark contrast to what she hoped for her daughter, and Chavez had worked tirelessly to ensure that her daughter would not experience the isolation, abuse, and fear that had permeated her own married life.

Nancy Chavez, director of the Pennsylvania Weed and Seed Program, through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, was born in Topeka, Kansas, in 1955. Her grandparents had moved there after working to build the railroad at the Rio Grande in Mexico. Nancy, her parents, and three sisters were the first Mexican-American family to settle in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, when her father was transferred from the Air Force Base in Alabama to the Navy Depot in 1963. The community gave them a warm welcome.

Nancy's family valued education and she did well in school. In 1973, after graduating from Cumberland Valley High School, Nancy attended Harrisburg Area Community College and worked at a local grocery store. Not long after, an opportunity

came for her to see the group Chicago in concert at the Farm Show complex with a blind date that her sister had arranged. Chavez and her date immediately hit it off, and "before I knew it I was falling in love. I packed my bags and followed him to Virginia where he served in the navy. I thought it was the right thing to do." The couple married on January 11, 1974.

What initially seemed like a romantic fairy tale quickly turned sour. "The marriage was abusive but I was determined to make it work. I convinced everyone that we had a wonderful life. I gave birth to my beautiful baby daughter, Randi Lee, on December 15, 1974." Yet living in fear became a way of life for Nancy. She was threatened, beaten, and berated when her husband was at home. He left for months at a time and she was just as frightened when he was gone. "Fear lived in my heart and kept me paralyzed. Having my daughter exposed to that violent environment – seeing it – hearing it – is the part that hurt the most. Finally, in 1979, I found the courage to move my daughter back home. Randi was five years old and ready to begin kindergarten."

During the following years, Nancy dedicated her life to raising her daughter and to a career in state government. Nancy went back to college and attended evening classes for 15 years. Her hard work paid off and in 1988 she earned a bachelor of arts in

science and a master's degree in public administration in 1995 from Penn State University. In those challenging times Nancy and Randi worked as a team. "We spent many hours studying together at the kitchen table. We were both very disciplined."

Randi attended Trinity High School in Camp Hill, where she loved music and was the school's drum major. She graduated in June 1993 and entered Bloomsburg State College the following fall. "She hated college. She was miserable being away from me," remembers Nancy. Nevertheless, "Randi studied hard and received a full scholarship in speech pathology, was the drum

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# Walk of Hope & Courage



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Mikell Worley is the founder and president of Mikell's Treasures. She has spent more than 20 years designing and delivering self-improvement trainings, has had several cover stories in various magazines, and recently illustrated her first children's book. She is an advocate for women and children.