

# Recuerdos de Isabel Casillas Sánchez

## Remembering Isabel Casillas Sánchez

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Sánchez family and the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center have received innumerable written tributes marking the passing of Mrs. Sánchez. Throughout this issue we shall highlight a very few of these tributes of a life well lived.*



The 1942 graduating class of Sidney Lanier High School in the Westside of San Antonio, Tx. Isabel is seated 3rd from the right.



Michael & Helen Chouinard, retired teachers from Lanier High School, pose with Isabel, a revered parent at the high school.

I don't know how long it will be before I can accept the loss of Isabel Sanchez, but it has not come yet. She was such a giant selfless human being. Whenever I was in her presence, she made me feel like such an imperfect person. Isabel was quite simply one of my life's greatest blessings. Her profound spirit will forever be a part of me and I am so grateful. My deepest condolences to the family at this time of loss. Isabel, my love to you forever. —Michael Chouinard

To be graduating from high school, as a young Latina in 1942, was a huge accomplishment for the time, noted Helen Chouinard, retired teacher from Lanier High School. She recalled Sánchez as “a great cook,” and estimates the tamales and capirotada sold at annual bailes at the Esperanza Center raised in the hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years. “She made a difference to lots of people’s lives,” she said. “Lanier lost a very stalwart supporter in Mrs. Sánchez. They were lucky to have her.”

SOURCE: *The San Antonio Report, 'Buena gente': Isabel Sánchez remembered as a protector of the West Side, by Nicholas Frank, June 20, 2021 (bit.ly/isabel-buena)*

As a pregnant high school student in my senior year, college was not the first thing on my mind. I was already living on my own with my partner and had no clue what the next chapter was to bring. I enjoyed learning and knew I wanted to be a role model for my child. I started to wonder what college would be like and how would I pay for it. I was fortunate enough to work with Lanier staff who helped me apply for FASA and scholarships. I asked myself, who would want to help a pregnant teen? Why would they choose me? I knew I wasn't the ideal typical straight A senior. But within several months, I received a notice from the school counselor that I was chosen for the Fuentes Sánchez Scholarship. I was shocked and even more amazed that I was going to meet the donors of the scholarship. To my surprise, they lived in my neighborhood! I nervously walked up to Mrs. Sánchez door, the walkway to the door felt like a mile with all

the beautiful greenery. I was immediately welcomed into Mrs. Sánchez home. I felt comfort and excitement. I was honored by her encouraging words and was in tears because she did not judge me for my situation. She believed in me. That scholarship not only helped me financially, it helped me emotionally. It fueled my fire. My community wanted me to succeed, I wasn't alone in this new journey. I was able to finish college and receive my Masters in Social Work and am now a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I will forever be grateful to Mrs. Sanchez for giving me hope and seeing my worth.

—Ruby Ruiz, 2006 Fuentes Sanchez scholarship Recipient

