

Island County Children's Commission

Children and Youth Hero Award, 2009

Victoria Santos

Victoria Santos's classroom at Langley Middle School has long served as a "safe Haven" where students come to feel accepted, safe and secure. There has seldom been a free time, before school, at breaks in the day, after school, when youth are not in evidence in Victoria's room, because this wonderful woman has the natural ability to be totally accepting and to make others around her feel worthwhile and nurtured.

Victoria's enthusiasm for people, for life and for the environment "infects" those around her, and easily motivates young people to learn new things and to want to contribute to their community. Because Victoria is real, authentically herself, this allows youth in her presence to feel safe to be themselves as well, to put their authentic selves into their classroom learning and their service learning activities.

Victoria is also a role model for hard work and follow-through. Once she is committed to something, you can be sure it will happen and be done well. Young people who learn from Victoria see how she conducts herself and that helps them to rise up, often above what they thought they could accomplish, and meet the challenges Victoria provides for them. They learn to be high level achievers – and to put their sincere hearts into a task.

As well as personal achievements, Victoria has taught students the value of community service. She doesn't just speak of this, but once again, she models it. Victoria has been active in collaborative work to benefit children, youth and their families in her free time – evenings, weekends and with her summer time away from school. When the call comes out to create a Town Hall on Underage Drinking, a Healthy Youth and Community Fair, a booth at Children's Day, or anything where people want to work "above and beyond the call of duty" to help children and youth – Victoria Santos is one who regularly heeds the call. She shows up, and she often brings young people with her.

The Island County Children's Commission recognizes that Victoria is a gifted and truly original person – a real contributor. This community, and the children, youth and families who reside here, are very lucky that Victoria resides here as well. We, the Island County Children's Commission, are privileged to be in a position to recognize Victoria Santos with our first annual **Children and Youth Hero** Award. On behalf of this county's children and youth, we say, "**Thank you Victoria**".