



Celebration of life for Berta Villares

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on May 26, 2011**



This speech was presented to attendees of FIU's Director of Benefits Berta Villares' memorial service on February 18, 2010.

Today, we come together as a family to mourn the passing of a co-worker and friend, Berta D. Villares, and to celebrate her life and the many ways she touched our lives.

Berta showed us what it means to be Worlds Ahead – to go beyond what is expected, to take the opportunities you are given and do something great. That was what Berta did – working her way up in Human Resources to Associate Director of Benefits. She did this through hard work, determination and a drive and desire to help others. By doing her part to meet the needs of our faculty and staff, Berta contributed tremendously to FIU's mission and goals. Her contributions, like those of all of the faculty and staff that she helped, helped make FIU the institution it is today.

And Berta's love for FIU went beyond her work. She was part of a proud Panther family. The many FIU graduates in Berta's family include her daughter Veronica, son-in-law Fernando, godson Carlos, and stepchildren Tony and Maria.

And through her work at FIU, Berta touched so many people - so many were fortunate to call her a friend. In her final days I know she was comforted by the outpouring of love and support from all of the members of the university community who made sure she knew they were thinking of her and praying for her. Berta put her heart and soul into FIU and in losing her we have lost some of our university's heart and soul, but we should take some comfort in the fact that Berta lives on.

She lives on through the example she set with her professionalism, commitment, and love for FIU. She lives on through each life she touched and made better. She lives on each time we remember a kind word from her. She lives on in our hearts.

About Berta Villares:

Berta Diana Villares was born the 2nd day of September of 1946 in, Habana, Cuba. Her parents Jose and Berta Sr. were also born in Cuba. She has a younger brother Jose Carlos Villares that resides in Puerto Rico. She has two children, daughter, Veronica Paysse married to Fernando Vega, and son, Mario Jose married to Stephanie Slivanik. They each have one son: Berta's grandkids, Luca (3 years old) and Marc (8 months).

When Berta was 14 years old her family left with great sadness their home in Cuba to make a new life in the island of Puerto Rico. It was there she attended the College of the Sacred Heart in part thanks to the United States Loan Program for Cuban Students offered at that time. She adored that institution and remained in contact with Mother Socorro Julia, who to this day works at the College. She also attended Marymount Manhattan College in New York. Berta graduated Cum Laude from college.

Berta (or "Bertica" as her friends and family called her) enjoyed traveling around the globe, with her favorite destination being Paris. Throughout her life Berta also resided in many countries such as Spain, Venezuela and Uruguay - the birth place of her two kids. Berta was fluent in spanish, english and french.

In 1996 her love for the academic world and serving others brought her to Florida International University. Berta was hired as a personnel representative for the office of Human Resources in the Benefits section. Her hard work, intelligence and attention to detail caught the eye of Maria Alam and Silvia Covas and Berta was later promoted to her current position. Berta went far and beyond the call of personnel duties, essential functions of the job, enrollment paperwork and reviews, she personally made sure that all the employees she attended benefited from her knowledge and service. She worked arduously for the University and everyone who encountered her commented on what a valuable asset she was to FIU.

On a personal note she was an avid reader, writer, and traveler. There are many FIU graduates in Berta's family: including her daughter Veronica and son in law Fernando both with Bachelor degrees from the school of Journalism at FIU, her godson Carlos and stepson Tony from the school of Business.

Berta Villares passed away in mid-April. Berta is survived by her daughter and son, Veronica and Mario Paysse, two beautiful grandsons, Luca and Marc, her brother Jose Carlos Villares, nephews, and her faithful companion, Bernardo Romero.