

Virginia Hochman honored as an Unsung Heroine of 2010

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women honored 100 Unsung Heroines of 2010 recently at the State House in Boston. Virginia Hochman, a volunteer at The Women's Center, was one of the recipients.

Virginia Hochman is an amazing woman and an inspiration to everyone at The Women's Center. Virginia was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts in November 1915. She has been an outstanding front desk volunteer for The Women's Center since 2003. In 2005 she received Outstanding Volunteer of the Year for her work at The Women's Center, but the reason TWC nominated her as an Unsung Heroine is her remarkable accomplishments over the past 94 years as a woman, a mother of three children, a business woman, teacher and an upstanding citizen who still volunteers in her community.

The Unsung Heroines are chosen from hundreds of nominations from cities and towns across the Commonwealth, and each is recognized for their outstanding contributions to their organizations and communities at a special ceremony in the Hall of Flags at the State House. The Unsung Heroines are women who don't make the news, but make the difference. They are the women who use their time, talent and enthusiasm to enrich the lives of others and make a difference in their neighborhoods, cities and towns.

Mrs. Hochman grew up in an era that did not recognize the importance of women attending college or getting ahead in the business world. She was born to parents who owned the People's 5¢-50¢ Store in the North End of New Bedford, where she learned the importance of hard work and the value of a dollar. Despite the obstacles and societal norms against women pursuing a career, she was determined to get a college education.

Listening to her story, she gives new meaning to "multi-tasking." She took the Civil Service exam and served as secretary to Mayor Carney of New Bedford for a number of years. At 24 years old, she was lucky to marry "her prince, Sam" who encouraged her to finish school and watched their three children while she attended Bridgewater State College Saturday mornings and one night a week. When there was a shortage of school teachers, the Superintendent of Schools asked her if she would like to teach. Teaching allowed her to be home with her children after school. She joined New Bedford Public Schools as an elementary school teacher, and noted she kept getting "promoted" to higher grades, and after 15 years started teaching at the high school level. She was a dedicated teacher for 42 years, retiring the year *after* her son, at the age of 80.

When Virginia lost her beloved husband, she wanted to find something meaningful to do with her time. She looked in the newspaper and an ad for volunteers at The Women's Center caught her eye. When interviewed recently she said, "In all my experiences I have never remembered a group as dedicated, helpful and patient as the staff at TWC, who have to work so hard but they are kind to everyone who comes in, including me." She has found good friends here and feels that she is making a difference to the women and children who find help at The Women's Center.

Virginia Hochman is an exceptional woman who says, "everybody has a story – and nobody can do better than the best they can." Virginia continues to do her best and The Women's Center is honored to have this "Unsung Heroine of Massachusetts" as a dedicated and committed volunteer at The Women's Center.