

Palmieri and Ray Barretto. He went on to manage virtually every name in the industry, including its two biggest stars: Tito Puente and Celia Cruz. His concerts grew more popular and by 1987 the wildly successful "Latin Tinge" nights at the Palladium on New York's 14th Street were bringing 3,000 "salseros" to dance every Thursday night. Mercado managed these events until 1992, when he re-focused his energies on the creation of a record label, RMM.

Mercado expanded his venture into numerous companies including RMM Records, RMM Filmworks, and two publishing houses. With over 140 artists signed to RMM Records, the label sold millions of recordings a year. The recipient of countless awards and proclamations, Ralph Mercado was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Tribute by Billboard Magazine in 1999.

Always an innovator, Ralph Mercado pioneered the presentation of salsa music in Africa, South America, Asia, and Israel. He was one of the first to bring Latin music concerts to such prestigious venues as Radio City Music Hall with Julio Iglesias' New York performance; Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall; the Beacon Theater; and Madison Square Garden.

The truth of course is that Mercado's death this week leaves a tremendous void in the hearts of not just his family and friends but also countless Latin music fans around the world. However, his body of personal and professional work leaves a distinguished legacy whose impact can be seen not just in the industry he helped create, but also in the countless lives that his music touched. Little boys and girls can dream of singing the songs that their parents know and love thanks to Ralph's extraordinary commitment, energy and discipline.

So Madam Speaker, rather than mourn his passing, I hope that my colleagues will join me in celebrating the life of Ralph Mercado, Jr. His is an inspirational story for all Americans, one that exemplified greatness in every single way.

HONORING MAYELA ROSALES

HON. MARIO DIAZ-BALART

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor an exceptional businesswoman, journalist and community activist from Naples, Florida, Mayela Rosales. As Executive Vice President of Azteca America SWFL and host of the most popular Spanish language TV show in Southwest Florida, D'Latinos al Dia, Mrs. Rosales is an example of what can be achieved through hard work and dedication.

With a degree in Journalism and Communications from the University of Zulia in her native country of Venezuela and 12 years of experience in the field, she came to the U.S. 13 years ago. Since then, she has worked towards ensuring that the fast-growing Hispanic community in Southwest Florida has access to news and information through Spanish language television programming and print. In 2003, Media Vista Group, the company she owned, integrated with Media Vista Publica-

tions and now produces the D'Latinos Magazine, D'Latinos online and D'Latinos al Dia program. Mrs. Rosales is Executive Director of the monthly magazine and host of the television show, which has been the only live, Spanish language program in the area for six years and airs every weekday in more than 400,000 homes.

In 2006, Mrs. Rosales, in partnership with her husband Orlando Rosales and others, acquired local TV station WTPH 14 Azteca America Southwest Florida in Naples. The station serves as a venue for Spanish language programming and news including D'Latinos al Dia.

In addition to her business ventures and career in journalism, Mrs. Rosales is a dedicated wife to husband Orlando and mother of two boys, Gabriel and Daniel. She is also active in a number of civic and charitable organizations including the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce, the Children's Museum of Naples, the American Heart Association, the Fifth Third Bank, the Ronald McDonald House, Hospice of Naples, Catholic Charities and Literacy Volunteers, and was the founder of the Council for Hispanic Business Professionals.

As we celebrate Women's History Month, I ask you to join me in congratulating my dear friend Mayela Rosales for her invaluable contributions to the Hispanic community and her dedication to professionalism and communicating accurate and valuable information to residents of Southwest Florida.

TRIBUTE TO THE BARTELSON
BRAVES

HON. JOHN SHIMKUS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an outstanding group of student athletes from Bartelso, Illinois.

The Bartelso Braves of Bartelso Elementary School, defeated Centralia Trinity Lutheran 49-26 to capture the Southern Illinois Junior High School Athletic Association Class S State Championship. The win followed victories in the quarterfinals over Rome and in the semifinals over Waltonville.

I want to congratulate Coach Gigi Kohrmann and Assistant Coach Abby Winkeler for all of their work with their team. I especially want to congratulate the members of the 2008-2009 Bartelso Braves state championship basketball team: Emily Koelling, April Gebke, Madison Thole, Kaitlyn Albers, Katlyn Albers, Paige Varel, Torre Kohrmann, Nicole Loepker, Noel Loepker, Jillian Menkhaus, Erin Brueggemann, Sophie Rickhoff, Elle Gebke, Chloe Beckmann and Madison Haake.

These young ladies have made our community proud, and have brought home the championship trophy to Bartelso. I wish them all the best in their future academic and athletic endeavors.

HONORING MILCA GUTIERREZ

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mr. RADANOVICH. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Milca Gutierrez upon being named as the Children's Miracle Network's "California Champion Across America" for 2009. Miss Gutierrez will be honored on Tuesday, March 17, 2009 at Children's Hospital Central California at an event to kick off the local and national public awareness program.

Milca Gutierrez, of Fresno, California, was diagnosed when she was four months old with a rare disorder called otogenesis imperfecta, commonly known as brittle bone disease. This rare disorder affects the connective tissue and causes bones to break easily and without any apparent reason. At the age of eleven, Miss Gutierrez has been seen at Children's Hospital Central California over 180 times and has undergone over ten operations; she remains positive with her motto "It's just a bone."

Miss Gutierrez is a constant source of brightness and support, whether to herself or others, she has a unique ability to always help those around her. Once a year she and her family travel to their native hometown in Mexico to provide clothes, toys and stuffed animals to families in need. She is able to live an active and full life; she loves swimming, math and dreams of becoming a doctor. Her unique situation has placed her in a position to advocate for children's hospitals across the nation, serve as a "Champion" for the State of California and act as an ambassador for the seventeen million children who are treated at children's hospitals every year. The Children's Miracle Network sponsors a variety of events to help raise money for children's hospitals; including the Champions Across America initiative, where one child from each state is selected to serve as a champion to help highlight the importance of a children's hospitals. Miss Gutierrez, along with her fellow champions, and her family will travel to Walt Disney World to participate in the Children's Miracle Network Celebration and to Washington, D.C. to highlight the vital work of children's hospitals.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to commend and congratulate Milca Gutierrez upon her achievements and strength. I invite my colleagues to join me in wishing Miss Gutierrez many years of happiness and success.

IN HONOR OF JOHN KURKOSKY

HON. MICHELE BACHMANN

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor John Kurkosky of Annandale, Minnesota for creatively using his song-writing and singing talents to support his neighbors in need.

A self-professed "shower singer," John makes a hobby out of writing and singing country, rock and gospel songs. Five years ago, he wrote a song, "Ice Fishin' My Buddies and Me" that gained popularity last year when it was featured on the local news story about