



March 26, 2012 Wyandotte Distinguished Graduate Inductee



James J. Candela
Class of 1960

James Candela distinguished himself as a dedicated educator, school administrator, Wyandotte School Board Member and community activist in his lifelong effort to improve opportunities for children and adults in the Downriver Area.

James graduated from Roosevelt High School in 1960. He participated in football, basketball, and Glee Club. He also enjoyed Student Government Day activities for the City of Wyandotte.

James attended Eastern Michigan University, where he earned both his Bachelor and Master's Degrees in Education in 1964 and 1966 respectively.

He began his teaching career in the Riverview Schools in 1964. Recognized for his teaching skills, James joined the Southgate Community Schools in 1968. He served as principal at three Southgate Schools - North Pointe, Davidson, and Allen. James also managed the construction of a TV production facility in Southgate and began producing the High School Challenge Bowl, which continues to operate its academic competitions currently.

Following retirement in 1999, Mr. Candela began his work for the Michigan Department of Education as a managing consultant for a major federal grant program in Comprehensive Reform in Michigan Schools. He spent 6 years at this important assignment working at both the State and National levels on school reform issues.

James is a lifelong resident of Wyandotte. In the 1980's he became involved with a rebirth of the Wyandotte Public Schools and their quality programs. His efforts as a Board of Education Member from 1987 - 1994 helped reinvigorate academics, sports, and extra-curricular activities for Wyandotte students. He was instrumental in the re-opening of the Wilson Middle School in 1986, returning the middle school concept for Wyandotte students and their parents.

These changes in the Wyandotte Public Schools reinvigorated the school system's work and elevated its reputation in the view of Downriver Communities and the Michigan Department of Education.

James was a member of the Board of Trustees for the Wyandotte Public School's Scholarship Foundation for 12 years. Together with his brothers, John and Mike, they sponsored the Candela Family Scholarship, an annual two-year scholarship awarded to a graduating senior.

Mr. Candela also has an abiding interest in City Government. He was elected to the Wyandotte Charter Revision Commission in 2000, and in 2010 his work with the Strategic Task Force resulted in the first-ever Vision and Strategic Plan for the City of Wyandotte to permit the City Government to better construct Wyandotte's future.

Throughout James' public career, he always placed the interests of children and residents first. He has worked to influence improvement in our city and in many schools locally and around the state.

James and Sylvia Candela live in Wyandotte. Their five children are all RHS graduates and among them hold nine college degrees.