

Writing Her Story: Inspirational Hoosier Women

Dr. Virginia Calvin



Education has not always been an accessible resource to women in the United States. There was a time, not too long ago, when it was only acceptable for women to enter into higher education to pursue a career as a nurse, teacher, or secretary. Dr.

Virginia Calvin has helped to break down those barriers for women in Indiana and serves as an advocate for women in all areas of higher education. “We know through research that education is the one link that changes lives. It has a greater impact on how we behave as citizens, an impact on healthcare, and how we take care of ourselves.”

Dr. Calvin recently retired from her position as the Chancellor of Ivy Tech in South Bend, a position she held for over 10 years, but has continued to serve on the board of commissioners for the Indiana Commission for Women (ICW). In her role as a commissioner, she is able to continue to address critical issues that impact women. “I have always been paid less. When I was superintendent, I was paid less. When I was the Chancellor of Ivy Tech, I was paid less. I know that a lot of that has to do with gender and it has a lot to do with race relations and diversity.”

The mission of the ICW piqued Dr. Calvin’s interest and struck a cord with her, “I’ve been a professional woman a long time, forty some years, and every issue that we talk about on the commission I have some experience in.” Calvin knows that the commission serves an important purpose in Indiana and that its existence helps to promote the status of women and the opportunities available to them. As a commissioner, she helps to ensure that the issues that are of most importance to women in her community get addressed. “I want to be able to say to the

women in South Bend, you know someone is working on that issue.”

Dr. Calvin knows from experience the struggles that women face. She has always been a working professional and has had to balance her work life with her family and personal life. She admits that she hasn’t quite figured out the formula to finding that balance, but encourages the next generation of women to keep trying. “It is very difficult because I’ve had to do it all and I want to say to young women ...along the way take care of you. That becomes real important... I can say you can do both, why does it have to be one or the other?”

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Women have made progress over the years and Dr. Calvin

acknowledges that

the struggles her generation faced have helped to bring a brighter future to the next generation. “You are in a generation where you are talking about sharing of power and equity. Just to think... to relive that, with the knowledge and the difficulties that I had, I can’t imagine a better place to go.” The fight for women’s equality is not over, but we have moved forward. Dr. Calvin’s advice to women thinking about bettering themselves and their lives is “Just go do what you’re going to do...Don’t tell me I’m going to or I thought about it – just do it!”



Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Voicing your opinion
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Pursuing higher education
- Mentoring another woman
- Learning more about the issues that affect women in Indiana.

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

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