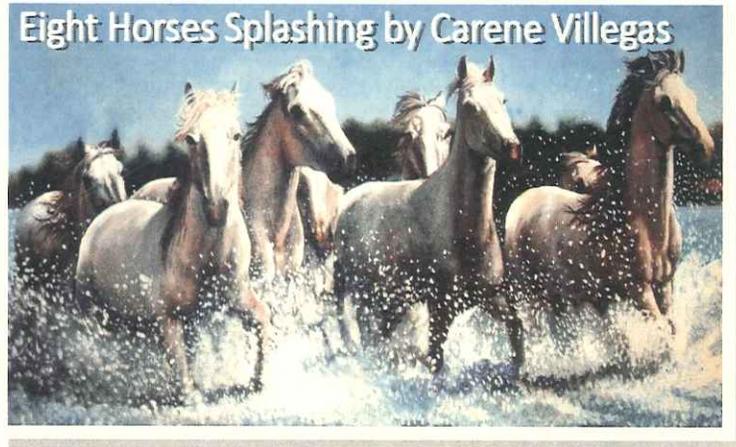


Thank you for hearing my story



Members of the legislature, hello, my name is Carene Villegas.

Thank you for allowing me to come and talk with you today and tell a little of my story and how support services have made a difference in my life.

Before I came into SORB, all of my decisions were made for me by my parents, leaving me completely dependent on them. I didn't know what to do or how to do it. Even finding a man to marry was decided for me. My sister controlled all of my money. She told me, "You are going to be 55 and you need to go to a nursing home now." I didn't want to live in a nursing home.

Because of the support that I have received through my case manager at SORB, I am now living independently and making my own decisions. I have even been living in my own apartment for two years. I am able to interact with my neighbors. One of my neighbors recently wrote me a thank you note. I feel like a contributing member of my neighborhood.

When I was a child, my mother asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I said "an artist." Now, I am an artist and an illustrator of children's books. SORB has encouraged me in my art. My art is displayed on the walls of the SORB office. SORB is helping me realize I can contribute to my community through my artwork. Through SORB, I have been able to live an active and productive life.

Without SORB, I wouldn't be standing here testifying today. SORB provides folks like me the opportunity, through the use of support service dollars, to realize our dreams and reach our personal goals of independence and community inclusion.