

# Enrique “Kiki” Camarena and National Red Ribbon Campaign™



Enrique (Kiki) S. Camarena was born on July 26, 1947, in Mexicali, Mexico. He graduated from Calexico High School in Calexico, California in 1966, and in 1968 he joined the U.S. Marine Corps. After serving in the Marine Corps for two years, Kiki was a Calexico fireman, Calexico police officer, and an Imperial County Deputy Sheriff. Kiki joined the Drug Enforcement Administration in June of 1974. His first assignment as a Special Agent with DEA was in a familiar place - Calexico, California.

In 1977, after three years in Calexico, 37-year-old Kiki was reassigned to the Fresno District Office in Northern California. Four years later, Kiki received transfer orders to Mexico, where he would work out of the Guadalajara Resident Office. For more than four years in Mexico, Kiki remained on the trail of the

country's biggest marijuana and cocaine traffickers. In early 1985, he was extremely close to unlocking a multi-billion-dollar drug pipeline. However, before he was able to expose the drug trafficking operations to the public, he was kidnapped on February 7, 1985. On that fateful day, while headed to a luncheon with his wife, Mika, Kiki was surrounded by five armed men who threw him into a car and sped away. That was the last time anyone, but his kidnappers would see him alive.

In honor of Camarena's memory and his battle against illegal drugs, friends and neighbors began to wear red badges of satin. Parents, sick of the destruction of alcohol and other drugs, had begun forming coalitions. Some of these new coalitions embraced Camarena's belief that one person can make a difference. These coalitions also adopted the symbol of Camarena's memory, the red ribbon. During his 11 years with DEA, Kiki received two Sustained Superior Performance Awards, a Special Achievement Award and, posthumously, the Administrator's Award of Honor, the highest award granted by DEA.

In 1988, NFP sponsored the first National Red Ribbon Celebration. Today, the Red Ribbon serves as a catalyst to mobilize communities to educate youth and encourage participation in drug prevention activities. Since that time, the campaign has reached millions of U.S. children and families. The National Family Partnership (NFP) and its network of individuals and organizations continue to deliver his message of hope to millions of people every year, through the National Red Ribbon Campaign™.

