

# Rivers will speak about how he overcame child abuse

Author, actor, domestic violence activist and retired football player Victor Rivas Rivers will deliver the keynote address at New Mexico Voices for Children's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala next week.

Rivers will relate his chilling, yet triumphant account of overcoming horrific abuse as a child. "Victor Rivers' personal story is riveting and inspirational," said Felicia Griffin, Operations and Development Director for NM Voices. "People come away from it with a greater appreciation of the real value of child advocacy work."

Rivers immigrated to the U.S. from Cuba with his family at the age of two. Ten years later, he went to the local police to tell them about the domestic violence he was witnessing and

experiencing at the hands of his father. Though he showed them his scars, bruises and burn marks, he was told that there was little the police could do. But with the help of caring coaches, teachers and several unofficial foster families, Rivers escaped the abuse and turned his life around — from being a hardcore gang member to senior class president. His story illustrates the concept that it takes a village to raise a child.

Rivers attended Florida State University on a full four-year football scholarship and, in 1978, he was a free-agent draft pick of the Miami Dolphins. In 1984, he began acting in films and on television. He has appeared in the films "The Mask of Zorro," "A Million to Juan" and "The Distinguished Gentleman," and in TV's "Miami

Vice," "CSI: Miami" and "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine."

Rivers was named spokesman for the National Network to End Domestic Violence, a public policy agency, in 1999. In 2005, his book, "A Private Family Matter: A Memoir," was published to highly favorable reviews. It has since been re-released in paperback as well as in Spanish translation.

The gala will also feature an awards presentation to 20 New Mexico advocates for children and 20 currently serving state legislators. NM Voices will release its NM Charter for Children, a vision for the future of New Mexico kids over the next 20 years.

The gala is Nov. 9 at the Embassy Suites, 1000 Woodward Place NE in Albuquerque, from 6-9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$100.