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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius

History being made by Kansas women

March is Women's History Month, and any study of women's history would not be complete without noting the accomplishments Kansas women have made during the long history of our state.

Whether pioneers in the arts, government, athletics, aviation, education, or other fields, the women of Kansas are truly remarkable.

Even before statehood, Kansan Clarina Nichols traveled the territory during one of the first campaigns to extend civil rights to all Kansans.

Susanna Madora Salter of Argonia was the first woman to be elected mayor of an American town, just weeks after Kansas women had been granted the right to vote in local elections. She was a predecessor of Senator Nancy Landon Kassebaum Baker, who was the first woman to be elected to a full term in the U.S. Senate without having succeeded a husband in Congress or been appointed to the post.

Amelia Earhart of Atchison was the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean, while Nellie Cline of Larned was the first female attorney to appear before the U.S. Supreme Court. And in the world of sports, Olympic gold medalist Lynette Woodard of Wichita was the first woman to play for the Harlem Globetrotters.

Even today there are still Kansas women making history; women like Nola Ochs of Jetmore.

Nola was alive during both world wars, and helped her husband, a Kansas wheat farmer, make it through the Dust Bowl. She raised four sons and survived breast cancer. And this year, Nola will become the oldest college graduate in America.

At the age of 95, Nola is a senior at Fort Hays State. Having seen so much history, Nola is now making her own.

Nola will soon be honored as the first recipient of the Kansas Woman Leader of the Year. She deserves this honor, because she embodies the pioneering spirit upon which this state was founded.

There is one other Kansas woman who is making history. Deborah S. Rose already had her name entered in our history books by becoming the first woman promoted to colonel in the Kansas National Guard.

This week, she became the first woman to be promoted to the rank of general in our Guard, another milestone in now-Brigadier General Rose's already remarkable career and another example for other Kansas women to follow.

There is a lesson here for all of us. Whether they are stars on a uniform or stars reached through difficulty by a student with a dream, here in Kansas history continues to be written by our mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters.

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