



SAVES



Setting New Goals for a New Life



Isabel Conde thanks SAVES for her success

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

My name is Isabel Conde. I am from Cuba. I studied at the University of Havana, where I earned my degree in biology in 1982. After that, I worked as a teacher in different levels at the Pedagogic Institute, and as a supervisor. After seven years, I went back to the university to complete my postgraduate education. This time I went to the Pedagogical Institute "Enrique Jose Varona", where I completed my post graduate education in the Pedagogical and Methodological fields.

When I finished these courses, I went back to work as a department head in Vocational and Polytechnic Education. I taught in my country for more then ten years while I was working as an administrator and supervisor. I also worked at the National Museum of Natural History at the Science Academy, where I continued working in education and in communications in Environmental Education, making history exhibitions, doing presentations, and at schools doing extracurricular and vocational activities. In 1993, I started my Masters Degree in the Didactics of Teaching Biology and Environmental Education. I left my country in August of 2003.

It is hard for me to remember my first days in this country. I thought that I had lost everything because I was thinking about my profession, which I felt was finished. However, after a few days, I realized that I had to fit my goals into my new life. The first one was that I needed to speak English in one year, and the second one was to meet my professional goals. So, full of hope and convictions, I came to South Dade Adult Education Center on September 15, 2003.

At South Dade Adult, I learned about the SAVES Program. This is special help from the government, together with Miami Dade County Public Schools, to assist refugees and asylees with their education. I was part of the SAVES Program as a student at South Dade Adult, and thanks to the SAVES Program I got help and support to reach my first goal: to be able to speak English in one year. I got books and special classes that are provided to SAVES students for free. This helped me a lot while I completed all of my ESOL levels.

During my first year as a student, I started to work in South Dade Adult Library as a volunteer. After three months, the school gave me the opportunity to work as a Media Specialist Assistant. After one and a half years, I got my certification and I could start to teach biology in the high school program.

Presently, I am working as a SAVES Counselor, and I am proud of the opportunity the school is giving me because as a SAVES Counselor I can help others in the same way that the SAVES Program has helped me. This is why I think that it is more than just my success story; it is our success story.

I am convinced that I would have had a difficult time to do what I did, and am still doing, without the help of all the wonderful people at South Dade Adult who have assisted me since my arrival in the United States. It is with a special thanks to the SAVES Program that I am where I am.

Prepared with funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services through the Florida Department of Children and Families, Office of Refugee Services.

If you know anyone else who would like to receive future newsletters, please send your request to Jtravieso1@dadeschools.net.