



SAVES

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

MDCPS

Freedom is a Necessity

“Freedom is the first value that we as humans have. As artists, without freedom, without liberty, we perish.” Artists and educators Edwin Villasmil and his wife Elba Martinez live by their words and that is why they were determined to leave, in 2004, the increasingly repressive situation in Venezuela.



Edwin Villasmil touches up one of his paintings

There, Elba worked as a sculptor, where she was in charge of twenty fellow artists who created murals, pottery, and other craft works. Edwin’s pre-Miami life involved theater, painting, graphic arts, sculpture, and jazz in Venezuela, New York, Washington, D.C., Spain, France, Italy, and Morocco. With Elba, they began to investigate the relationship between art, society, and nature, a theme that plays an integral part in their current works. Edwin has been honored with numerous awards and his works are in various museums, private, and public collections. He was past president of the Venezuelan Association of Artists, a cultural advisor for centers, museums, and universities, director of art galleries, a judge and curator at various expositions, member of the Union of Radio and Television Performers, and a member of the Writer’s and

Association of El Impulso and El Informador. He is also a member of the Asociación Internacional de Artes Plásticas (UNESCO).

By 2004, the situation was “too hot” in their homeland, so they left, under the guise of a commission for a mural in the Miami area, arriving in May of that year. In early January of 2005, they both registered in ESOL classes at Miami Sunset Adult. They credit Ms. Yvette Holley, Sunset Adult’s counselor, with helping them become established both at school, and in Miami. They especially appreciated the employment referrals. By May of 2005, Edwin and Elba were approved for asylum. Now they were able to join SAVES.

In the beginning, their adjustment to Miami was very difficult. That is why all the assistance SAVES provided eased the transition. They were also impressed with the high quality and excellence of the educators at Sunset. They particularly expressed their gratitude to the SAVES contacts, Leyda Osuna and Maria Diaz, and to Sunset’s principal, Dr. Dulce De Villa, for all their help. They are currently searching for a publisher for their latest book, a graphic illustration of the history of Florida.

Again, Edwin and Elba Martinez would like to offer a heartfelt thanks to Sunset Adult and the SAVES Program for all it has done for them.



Edwin and Elba—grateful artists

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