



# SAVES

## Venezuelan Asylee Grateful for SAVES Support

# Miami-Dade County Public Schools

My name is Sara Elena Estevez, and I am from Caracas, Venezuela. In my country, I worked as a music teacher, a choir director, and finally as the manager of a local television station before immigrating to the United States with my husband in March of 2005.

My initial feeling when I arrived to this country was panic. Starting a new life in a new place, leaving family and friends behind, and not knowing what the future would bring makes this a common feeling for newly arrived immigrants.



Ms. Katherine Friz, American Adult SAVES contact, and Ms. Sara E. Esteves enjoy a relaxing moment

Because of the political turmoil in Venezuela, I immediately applied for asylum, and it was granted 10 months later. My first task was to learn the language since my goal is to continue working in the fields of education and television here in the U.S.

I enrolled in the ESOL Program at American Adult Center, and I was referred to the SAVES Program. The program provided all the books necessary for my ESOL classes at no cost, and I was able to enroll in the SAVES Targeted ESOL Classes. These classes are strictly for SAVES students, and the average enrollment is between 10 to 15 students. As a result, there is much more teacher-student contact, and this helped me to learn English faster.

When I completed the ESOL Program, I was advised by my teacher, Ms. Smithen, to start the wonderful task of volunteering as her ESOL assistant. I was also hired by the SAVES Program at American Adult to work as their attendance clerk and to help out with clerical matters.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the priceless help given to me and to all those who have been and will be beneficiaries of the SAVES Program. Thanks to Ms. Smithen who, as an ESOL teacher, has been a guide to me since the beginning, to Mr. Alan J. Bashaw, the school's principal, and to everyone who belongs to the wonderful educational community at American Adult Center. Thank you very much for helping us in building a new life in this great country by giving us the necessary tools of an education.

Finally, I would like to tell all those people enrolled in adult education programs to be persistent with their studies and their choices. In the beginning it's very difficult, but your daily efforts will bring you closer to achieving your goals.

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.

For more success stories, go to <http://saves.dadeschools.net>

If you know anyone else who would like to receive future newsletters, please send your request to [Jtravieso1@aol.com](mailto:Jtravieso1@aol.com).