



SAVES

Cuban Dentist Overcomes Obstacles

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Maria Suarez has proven over and over again that few things will prevent her from reaching her goals. Born in Manzanillo, Cuba, Ms. Suarez was accepted to the University of Santiago, where she studied to be a dentist. Eight years into her profession, Maria completed her second internship and became an orthodontist, a specialty of dentistry that is concerned with the irregularities of the teeth and their correction.



Maria Suarez—Cuban dentist

While Ms. Suarez had a prestigious position in a local clinic, she grew increasingly disenchanted with the policies and practices of the national government. In 1998, she applied for the Cuban Visa Lottery and was selected in 2000. When she alerted her employer, she was forced to resign immediately. She was also barred from leaving Cuba until 2005. Based on such experiences, Maria feels that in her country the government controls all aspects of one's life and the citizens are forced to accept whatever they decide is best for you. On December 31st, 2005, Maria Suarez arrived in Miami. She moved in with her parents and quickly found employment as a cleaning

lady at a local hotel. Maria claims that reality in the U.S. showed its true colors the first day she compared the price of living in South Florida to her meager salary. That is when she decided to enroll for free English classes at Miami Beach Adult Center, and that is where she met Ms. Mirtha Gonzalez, the SAVES contact at this school. Because of the SAVES Program, Maria has benefited by receiving free books for her classes, free monthly bus passes, and an open door policy with Ms. Mirtha Gonzalez. Ms. Gonzalez encourages her to continue on her path of reaching her goals. Ms. Suarez has also benefited from the SAVES Targeted ESOL classes offered at Miami Beach Adult, which are much smaller and more student oriented than regular ESOL classes.

Today, Maria is making great strides in ESOL Level 3, as she prepares to enroll in the Dental Assistant Vocational Program at Lindsey Hopkins Technical Education Center. Even with all of the hardships she has endured, Ms. Suarez proudly claims she prefers her life today compared to the life she lived in Cuba. We wish you luck Maria.



Ms. Mirtha Gonzalez and her pupil Ms. Suarez

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.