



VISIT OUR NEW SITE AT CASANUEVAIVDA.ORG

Ex Casa Nueva Vida Resident - *Meagan Anderson* “Blazing Her Way into BC's Heart”

by Alexandra Schaeffer

Most students who are regular patrons of Corcoran Commons' weekday lunches are either familiar with, or have at least heard of, the “Blazing Bowls lady.” Perched behind the counter to the left when students first walk in, the Blazing Bowls station can always be guaranteed to have at least a 10-minute long line snaking behind it. Most students are willing to wait it out, not only because of the food awaiting them, but also largely in part due to the smiling face behind the counter. Meagan Anderson, widely referred to as the “Blazing Bowls lady,” can always be depended on to have a smiling face and warm welcome for everyone who comes through her line. Due to the nature of the food preparation, students typically wait for about five minutes for their orders to be made. This allows for Anderson to chat with students and really get to know them. With most of her customers returning regularly, Anderson's immediate friendly approach sets the foundation for her to build relationships with the students.

Yet, however much information Anderson learns about her patrons, this daily fixture in many students' lives still remains largely a mystery. The eldest of six children, Anderson was born and grew up in Boston. After having a son of her own, Anderson began

living in Springfield, Mass., where she worked as a nurse's assistant and homecare provider. However, this work proved taxing on her emotional health.

“I couldn't deal with the losses. It made me change what I wanted to do, so I moved to Arizona to start a new life, which was short-lived because I couldn't deal with being so far away from my family,” Anderson said. “So after talking with my son I moved back to Boston, and I got a job doing hair, which I still have.”

After a friend of hers, who had been a Boston College employee for nine years, mentioned that she should apply for an opening in Dining Services, Anderson jumped at the opportunity in July of 2010.

To read more please visit:

- www.casanuevavida.org or go to
- http://www.bcheights.com/blazing-her-way-into-bc-s-heart-1.2827350#.UKKycG_LS3R

Casa Nueva Vida

Changing Lives one homeless family at a time!

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR ANNUAL APPEAL

It's that time again when we request your support!

We were not be able to help families in need if it were not for the generous contributions of supporters like you. We welcome all gifts at any time, but we solicit them in our newsletter and in a special appeal at the end of the year.

IN THIS ISSUE



Mother of Year

Carmen Sanchez, a single homeless mother came to Casa Nueva Vida in 1997 after temporarily sharing a one bedroom apartment with a friend and her friend's children. Carmen had 2 children of her own, her 7 year old son, Yardley, and her 3 year old daughter Yewellyn.



Marlenni Garcia

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Carmen Sanchez

Mother of the Year

Carmen Sanchez, a single homeless mother came to Casa Nueva Vida in 1997 after temporarily sharing a one bedroom apartment with a friend and her friend's children. Carmen had 2 children of her own, her 7 year old son, Yardley, and her 3 year old daughter Yewellyn.

Along with her homelessness, Ms. Sanchez also faced the additional challenge of caring for her 3 year old daughter who was blind. Little Yewellyn, who after two separate cornea surgeries, was only able to gain a blurry, minimal vision from her left eye. Living with 16 families in a diverse setting is not easy, but Carmen's positive disposition benefited her greatly. Her attitude was "I am a very positive, open minded and communicative person and I know if I understand others, others will understand me"

Ms. Sanchez mentioned repeatedly that while at Casa Nueva Vida she learned to be grateful for what she had and to see life in a positive way. "I got lots of support from the staff at Casa Nueva Vida. I am especially grateful to Mrs. Carmen Candelaria (now deceased) for her support and her words of

After living at Casa Nueva Vida for over a year, Ms. Sanchez and her family moved into their own apartment. Carmen continued with her own personal goals while caring for her children - "I didn't know how to drive. Well, I learned and after getting my driver's license I started working on my citizenship and today I am proud to say that I am an American



citizen." Shortly after leaving the shelter, Carmen's daughter, Yewellyn, had yet another surgery, which unfortunately left her right side vision in total darkness, putting stress on her already weakened left eye. Like her mother, however, Yewellyn has persevered with her goals in life. She is now 15 years old, an honor student in high school, taking regular classes and has recently submitted a poem for a competition in the Boston Public Schools. She is working on a Book of Poems to be sent to Congress. Yewellyn does not let her limited vision handicap her. Her ambition is to become a lawyer, a writer or a doctor. Her favorite channel is the Health Channel.

Ms. Sanchez' son, Yardley, who is a senior in High School, is an exceptional student with inspirations to become a professional baseball player. He is working part time at

Stop and Shop, where he is considered to be a good and dedicated employee.

Ms. Carmen Sanchez is an exceptional mother who has put the welfare of her children first. She is a true fighter who has strived to stay afloat and move her family forward - "I always said to my kids, they have to work hard so they can be someone in life; education is the only thing you can ever have and no one can take that away from you".

Congratulation, Ms. Carmen Sanchez to you and your wonderful family and thank you for being a vivid inspiration to our staff and to other homeless families residing at Casa Nueva Vida.

Current Projects

Casa Nueva Vida Boston is renovating its bathrooms check status online...



Touching Up!

Recovering from Sandy



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



Special Thanks to

Zadoozy, for donating a fantastic vacuum cleaner to Casa Nueva Vida — Lawrence. The vacuum will be used primarily in the cleaning of the house and playroom which support part of our mission to serve homeless families and children, specially in a clean environment.

Thank you **Zadoozy** for supporting our mission.

We always need help!

For volunteer opportunities, holiday donations, or any arrangement benefitting the families at Casa Nueva Vida please contact:

Doris Gaitan,
Case Manager for Family Services
doris.gaitan@casanuevavida.org

(978) 557-5775 ext. 302

FAST FACTS

850 Families

Placed in save and affordable housing

FIGHTING HOMELSSNESS IN ALL FRONTS



Computer Program

We are very Diverse

- 45% African American
- 2% Asian
- 15% Caucasian
- 36% Hispanic
- 2% Multi National

Casa Nueva Vida has a strong Adult Computer/Job Training Program, developed and delivered by our Director of Development, who is a talented Graphic, Web and Production Designer with a degree in Computer Science. Under his leadership, we have upgraded our Basic Computer Classes and instituted a new Microsoft Certification program.

The Adult Computer Program and the Children/Teen Educational Programs run concurrently from 6PM to 8PM, Monday through Thursday. These programs function independently of each another in that they have their own staff, learning spaces, and objectives. However, the Adult classes depend on the Children's/Teen's Educational Program because without it, the adults could not spend an intensive 2 hour session studying Computers without having to care for their children.

Likewise, the Adult classes occupy the parents, so that the staff and volunteers can work one-on-one with the children at the shelter.

Casa Nueva Vida is located in Jamaica Plain, a community served by Citizens bank, the long-standing hub of the Latino population in Boston, Massachusetts. In the latest census, 24.9% of this community considered themselves to be of Hispanic/Latino origin.

The problems of poverty, hunger and homelessness in Massachusetts' Hispanic community are very serious. Recent studies by the Center for Social Policy at the University of Massachusetts states that "90% of the 1,100 families who utilize the state's shelter system annually are headed by women. Of these women, 32% (the highest percent) are Hispanic/Latina."

According to the Mauricio Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development & Pubic Policy, Massachusetts has the highest Latino poverty rate in the country. More than one third (37%) are poor compared with the Nation's Latino poverty rate of 25%. Massachusetts Latino unemployment rate is 15% compared with the Nation's Latino unemployment rate of 10%. The median family income of Latinos in Massachusetts remains well below that of White and Black families.

This significant amount of poverty manifests itself in high rates of homelessness, little access to healthcare, financial difficulties and academic problems. There is no question that the demand for our services remains high.

In our Boston location, the adults range in age from 18 to 35 years old and have, on average, 2 children. Most of our families



qualify for Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and therefore are living below the poverty level. Most

referrals come from the Boston area, but referrals are accepted from throughout Massachusetts.



Marlenni Garcia

by Zaida Estremera

When Marlenni Garcia stayed at Casa Nueva Vida from September 22, 2008 to October 12, 2009, it was easy to see that she was a very positive, enthusiastic individual. She is a single mother with two young boys. Upon first meeting with her, we discussed a plan for economic self-sufficiency. Her goals stemmed from a previous program in Santo Domingo, where she had already graduated from a registered nurse school.

The United States, however, did not recognize her degree as valid, so she became discouraged at first. With a little encouragement, she was able to pursue personal goals of becoming a registered nurse in the United States.

Marlenni and her two children were easily settled into a routine at Casa Nueva Vida. Her children attended a program with Head Start during the day, while Marlenni studied English as a second language with a collaborative agency. She took advantage of every educational opportunity offered at Casa Nueva Vida, including a volunteering position at Brigham and Women's Hospital that ultimately led her to obtain her certified nurse's assistant license.

Thank you for supporting Casa Nueva Vida. It is a great place where families can move out of poverty and become self-sufficient. I will never forget the kindness and support."



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Says Marlenni, "Since moving out of Casa Nueva Vida, I have found a full-time position as a certified nurse's assistant working in residential homes. In September, I will continue courses at Roxbury Community College towards my Nursing degree".

Marlenni once said about her stay at Casa Nueva Vida that she had always been encouraged to achieve her goals, and was given various referrals to meet those goals. Marlenni states that Casa Nueva Vida was instrumental in helping her utilize the several opportunities available to her in the surrounding community. She says that those resources helped to provide her children and her with a better lifestyle.

"I will continue visiting Casa Nueva Vida as they will always be my place of inspiration and support.

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