

Ms. Maria Hernandez [Magdalena Cruz]

Ms. Hernandez works in the County Child Development Center as a Transition Facilitator. Ms. Hernandez was born in what seems to be a semi-rural town in Hidalgo (San Agustin Tlaxiaca) in a family of 10 siblings. The father worked in construction, mostly traveling to Mexico City to find work (about 2.5 hours away), where he stayed most of the time (and where he ended up raising a second family). Betty spent her early childhood in a single room with dirt floor, no water, and no natural gas. At age 15 the family was able to access potable water and natural gas. Both parents were semi-literate but the mother was highly motivated to educate her children, at least to complete primary education. Ms. Hernandez went beyond and with the support of her mother left to Pachuca (Hidalgo capital city) to enroll in the teaching school (escuela normal). The mother insisted that a teacher certificate would give her tools to leave the state of poverty in which the family always found itself. After graduating, she left to Mexico City with a sister, with the plan of enrolling at the university to study something of her choosing, perhaps engineering. However, she did not get to do it because of her work load was too heavy (two shifts every day).

Ms. Hernandez had a sibling in North Carolina, close to Nashville. She came to visit her relatives three times with a tourist visa which she was able to obtain because of her employment in Mexico as a teacher. During her visits she traveled seasonally with her relatives to Florida to work in agriculture (oranges). The money she earned she was able to save for the remaining of the year. At the third or fourth time she came to NC, she decided to stay and marry a man she had met in one of her previous visits. With him she continued to migrate seasonally to Florida and in one of these trips she gave birth to one of her three children. The experience was difficult because of her not knowing the English language. Indeed, that experience, and perhaps other similar experiences, serve as motivation for her to work and help migrant families and recent immigrants. In Florida, she got a job in a migrant education center. After migrating seasonally between Florida and North Carolina for a few years, the family decided to

settle in Ash County, near Nashville. There she found a job in the school system and the husband started a business (tienda El Aguila Azteca in Nashville). The couple later divorced (he is in jail).

Ms. Hernandez got a job with the county school system to work in the childhood development center. At the beginning she was uncertain about her capabilities to perform well in the job. However, with the support of her supervisor, a person she considers to be a key person in her life because of the support she has provided her, she has been able to succeed. Her job involves working with children and families of all children, not only Latino.