

SUCCESS WITHIN REACH

Uplifting students' and their families' lives

By Anne Stokes

As a single mom, Daisy Morales wasn't looking for another job, she was looking for a career — something stable with good prospects — to support herself and her daughter. Unfortunately, the only work she was able to find was in restaurants, less than ideal with unpredictable schedules and hectic hours. That's when she started looking for something better.

"I know my mom struggled and I know she worked really hard to give me a good life. I don't want [my daughter] to see me struggle. I want her to think, 'My mom has a good job, she has a good career. She's independent and can do things on her own,'" she says. "I want her to believe, 'If my mom can do it, I can do it too.'"

Morales found something better at Vista Adult School. A recent graduate of their medical/phlebotomy pathway, she's currently a student at Palomar College working toward a nursing career. Until her aunt suggested adult school, Morales didn't even know it was an option. Once she enrolled, she found a quality education, tuition cost within reach and supportive staff and faculty who helped her forge her own path to success.

Quality education, affordable tuition

One of the first things that struck Morales was tuition cost: She found other programs in the area significantly more expensive yet didn't always offer the classes she was interested in. Once enrolled as a student, she was very impressed with her instructors.

"I feel like they gave me a great way to get into the medical field without getting myself in debt. ... It's not a super long program and they have really great teachers," she says. "They're very knowledgeable about what they do and when I was in class, I felt that I was learning from the best. ... I'm really good at what I do and I feel that's because I had great teachers."

When finances unfortunately become an obstacle, Morales says her counselor con-



Daisy Morales with her 2 year old daughter Paola at Vista Adult School, whose goal is uplifting students like her. She's now attending classes to become a nurse at Palomar Community College in San Marcos. Photo by Charlie Neuman

nected her with California's Fresh Success program, which helped pay tuition and other expenses.

"Fresh Success really helped me finish the program," she says. "I was able to go to class, stay there, and focus on class, not worry about finances."

Support in and out of the classroom

Morales says the support she got went beyond academic. She admits going back to school, balancing work and parenthood has been hard, but that faculty and staff encouraged her in many different ways.

"[My teacher] knew that I was having a tough time and she said, 'It's OK, we all go through tough times. We'll get through it,'" she says. "I feel like a lot of teachers and staff are supportive of me wanting to become a nurse."

According to Morales, that support also included working with her to develop a plan to achieve her career goals.

"[The counselor] sat down with me one-on-one and I told her what my goals were,"

Morales says. "She said, 'How else can we help you? What do you need from me?' That, for me, meant a lot."

Support and success

Morales says Vista Adult School has changed her family's life. She's grateful for the support she got from teachers and staff, its affordability, and the opportunity it's given her to build a career.

"What really stood out for me was how much they're willing to help. The counselors were so willing to help me and figure things out with me. They wanted me to succeed and that really made me want to succeed even more," she says. "Even now, I'm in my first year of college and I have a 3.4 GPA and I feel like I wouldn't be here if I didn't have help from Vista Adult School."

 Vista Adult School

For more information on what Vista Adult School can offer you, visit www.vistaadultschool.org or call 760-758-7122.