

Lisbeth Fernandez



Lisbeth Fernandez, or Lis as she likes to be called, was born in Puerto Rico and moved to Schenectady with her family when she was just five years old. After high school, Lis married her first husband and had two children. Her marriage did not last, but she was determined to be a strong mother and support her children. She was a single mother for five years before she met her current husband Luis, and together they had two children.

While she was unemployed, a friend referred her to SCAP's Career Readiness program. She was doubtful that she would pass the test, but she took it anyway. Lis was thinking that she didn't have time to go to school; she needed to get a job to pay the bills. Once she passed the test, she felt encouraged. She said, "Now is the time for me to finish something that I started and not quit. SCAP helped me take control of my life and work for what I wanted to achieve." Initially, her husband was unsure about her attending classes because there would be less income, but Lis explained to him why it was important to her.

As Lis continued through SCAP's Career Readiness class, she realized that the training provided her with a sense of how to be a serious and reliable employee. The three-week class prepared her for a career. Her instructor, Nan informed the class that attendance was mandatory, and to have a back-up plan. Lis had a plan A as well as, B, C and D. "Nan taught me to have people that I can trust as my support system. The right people that you can rely on. Nan helped to improve my self-esteem, guided me to make the right decisions and encouraged me not to give up." Lis realized that the staff understood the obstacles many people face, and if people talked about quitting, someone was right there to assist and provide guidance.

Like many parents, Lis does most things for her family, frequently putting her needs second. During her C.N.A. training, she managed to complete her homework before she returned home, so that she could care for her family without distractions. Her husband realized the importance of this and occasionally took time off to care for their children so Lis could attend class. When things became difficult, Lis occasionally thought about quitting the program, but her daughter spoke up and said, "Mom, you always tell me not to quit something you start. This is something you always wanted." Lis realized that helping people is what she was meant to do. Her future dream is to earn her RN and provide healthcare for people who have been neglected and don't have a support system.

Lis knows that at times she gives too much of herself to others, but she is proud of the fact that people can rely on her. Lis admires her grandmother who taught her this: *...there is always love no matter what struggles you go through in life...every obstacle in life is just another journey you have completed in your life.*

Lis is more confident now that she has completed her training and she looks at life through a more positive lens. Since earning her C.N.A., Lis has been offered three jobs. She is employed working full time with seniors in the healthcare field where she is destined to be happy, giving the residents the gift of her big smile and her even bigger heart!