

From Tomato Picker to Teacher: Maria Segura's Inspirational Journey

The Family Literacy Academy of Immokalee is the caring place where Maria changed her life forever. When Maria's family started at the Family Literacy Academy of Immokalee, the young mother had no high school diploma and limited English skills. She helped her family make ends meet as a migrant worker. Even her older children worked the fields to pitch in.

"It broke my heart watching them spend weekends and summers working in extreme conditions. Life was very, very hard," said Maria.

So when her young son asked to go to preschool, Maria realized she must find a way to go back to school to give her family a better life.

She chose the Family Literacy Academy of Immokalee. It was a good choice. At the academy:

- Adult learners with English as a second language progress an average of nearly one-half a grade level in one school year
- Participating children progress an average of nearly one grade level in reading in a single school year.
- Both children and adults receive 108 hours of literacy instruction in one school year.

"I heard about the Family Literacy Academy of Immokalee and they welcomed me and my toddler," she said. "I worked hard to earn a GED diploma and my child development accreditation so I could get a better job. I was finally showing my kids how education provides many wonderful opportunities."

Because of her hard work, in 2009 Maria became the first Barbara Bush Foundation college scholarship recipient in Florida. Thanks to a partnership with the Florida Association of Postsecondary Schools and Colleges she enrolled in Southwest College and never looked back.

"From the time I stepped into my first college class I knew teaching was what I was meant to do," said Maria.

Today, Maria is still hitting the books as she works toward a Bachelors degree in Education. While proud of her own



Maria Segura earns her college degree and a hug and smile from Barbara Bush and Doro Bush Koch.

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academic success, Maria is most proud of setting a good example for her children. Her two oldest sons are recent college graduates; both are now pursuing Master's degrees. Her two youngest are honor students.

Like Barbara Bush, Maria believes education is a family affair. "Thanks to an opportunity to go back to school with my child in tow, today I am a different person," she said. "No longer a migrant farm worker, I am still the wife of a supportive husband, the mother of four amazing children, and now a college graduate and a teacher who loves to inspire the next generation."

If you'd like to sponsor a family, the cost is \$250 per month. you're your monthly gift of \$250 pays for our teacher costs, food and curriculum.

Your investment not only will improve the lives of the family you sponsor and pave the way to its greater success, but it also will help to create a stronger Florida and a stronger America for everyone.

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