

## MILAGROS FELIZ

Milagros was a well-established business woman before she came to Canada from the Dominican Republic. Wanting to explore new opportunities and make a better life for herself and her children, she travelled to Canada in 2016.

*“When I stepped on the plane to Canada, I was sad but relieved and full of hope.”* While moving to a new country brought with it some uncertainty, Milagros was confident that Canada was a land of opportunity where she would grow and fulfill her dreams.

*“As soon as I arrived, I began volunteering at Unison Health and Community Services, providing administrative support to a Tax Preparation Clinic and also volunteered as a Multicultural*



*Ambassador for Luminato through CultureLink's Community Education Program for Newcomers. Through my community engagement, I saw the need and the possibilities to contribute and thank Canadians. It motivated me to start looking at different opportunities available and made me want to do more.*

*I had no idea on how I would get to where I wanted to be, but I knew that I didn't want to live my life working one survival job after another. My English skills were limited and I realized that improving my English was a must. I enrolled in three different schools and studied English six days a week for months and months. I was confident that with a little help, I could use my skills and work experience in a way that would allow me to make a decent living and support my children, especially as a sole provider.”*

Milagros was introduced to Martha Santamaria, Job Developer at COSTI's Women of Courage Program, by her Case Worker. *"From the beginning, I took my application and potential involvement in the program very seriously. I knew my typing and other soft skills were very good and I would do the best I could to gain admission. The process was not easy, but getting the admission immediately gave me a sense of pride. I was very happy. Attending the program and going to school on a daily basis was not easy. I was faced with some life challenges, but was determined to succeed."*

By taking classes at Humber College and attending workshops hosted by COSTI, Milagros gained important insights and guidance in navigating her future employment and educational opportunities. *"My vision became clearer and more achievable. I wanted it all! My goals were to secure a student placement at AMA Legal Services in order to gain Canadian work experience in Office Administration and to continue to learn and educate myself by enrolling in post-secondary education after I completed the program."*

Milagros is an example of how newcomers to Canada can achieve success, adapt to a new environment, engage in their community and help others in need.

*"I am very hopeful about the future. I'm on my way to achieving my Canadian dream of launching my own legal office, not just for myself, but for the future of my children."*

COSTI's Women's Services, encompass a wide variety of programs, assisting women in moving from a condition of dependency and isolation to a more empowered state. Operating with the shared objective of enhancing the full and equal participation of women in all facets of society, COSTI staff assist women of diverse backgrounds and experiences in overcoming economic, health, legal, and cultural barriers.

The Women of Courage program, offered in partnership with Humber College, provides women with a college certificate in office administration. Combined with group counselling, life skills workshops and job search activities, women are prepared for employment.

It is COSTI's hope to continue to offer the program in 2019, but without the support of private donations, newcomers like Milagros will not have the opportunity to receive the same support and education.