

Wants to Work

Esperanza Zambrano has spent half of her life in Columbia, with the other half in the United States. Now 60 years old, she is looking for work.

In Columbia she studied architecture, but then moved to the U.S. and was unable to practice architecture in the U.S. without the credentials. She divorced her husband and worked two jobs to support her daughter, who is now 31 years old, and her father and mother, living in Florida, Georgia, Virginia and Pennsylvania.

Her first job in the U.S. was with Home Depot where she was promoted from stocker, cashier, head cashier and supervisor over a 15 year period. At the same time, she worked for FedEx as a handler and courier. "I learned a lot on my jobs. I learned English by listening to people. But I realized that I needed to increase my vocabulary and write better," she said.

While in Georgia she went to a community college to improve her English. It was a big disappointment. "They focused on how to write sentences and did not help me with vocabulary. And they did not care about the students," she recalls. "The bad part is that six years later I still owe the college \$20,000 for tuition."

Esperanza came to Center for Literacy eight months ago for ESL classes, which she attends twice a week. She is enjoying the class and is learning from instructor Mitch Berger and from the students. "He [Mitch] is the best. He is very patient and an excellent teacher. I enjoy talking with the students, who come from many countries. We are all learning."

Esperanza retired five years ago, but now wants to re-enter the workforce. "I am improving my typing skills to do data entry or find another office job. My ultimate goal is to be trained to be an X-ray technician. I realize that I love to work."