

WELCOMING PRINCETON

Recognizing the contributions made by newcomers and immigrants

MARIA'S HAIR SALON



As a child, I was a frequent customer in Maria's Hair Salon. I used to go there to try a crazy hairstyle or just to shape it up for a special event. Even though I was there often, I never had the opportunity to meet the owner. I had the pleasure of meeting Maria Ortega, the owner of the salon. Maria has an inspirational story of how she emigrated from her native country, and accomplished starting her own business in the Princeton community. Maria was born in Naranjito, Ecuador and came to this country at the age of 14 years old to reunite with her hard-working mother and brothers, who were here in the states. Ever since she was a young girl, she had a passion for cutting hair. She had even wanted to get a certificate, but was unable to do so in Ecuador. When she came to the United States, she ended up in Brooklyn, NY from which she eventually moved on to Hamilton, NJ. Once settled there, she worked at the Quaker Bridge Mall for 9 years in a salon, until she had the opportunity to start her own business. Maria also added that throughout those years, it was hard to succeed as she was a woman with kids. Fortunately, that never stopped her from working hard for what she wanted, and never gave up on her dreams. Being able to have her own business was not easy as she had loans and a lot of paperwork that was included, but the previous owner helped her out by giving her an extended time to pay for the business. She remembers how the first 2 years, money was tight especially with the economy at the time. But, as she recalls, she never stopped working hard. One piece of advice that helped her out, and that she gives to new immigrants trying to find their path is, "See what you like; there are a lot of possibilities and never stop dreaming for what you want." Maria now lives in Trenton, NJ but is happy with her business in Princeton, though she feels community members should be more informed on how they can succeed. To date, she has been open for 7 years and is welcoming any new customers. Lastly, she wants to thank her customers, and everyone who helped her out with her business.

Interview by Luis Estrada

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