

WELCOMING PRINCETON

Recognizing the contributions made by newcomers and immigrants

LA JOLIE



I had the privilege of speaking with Tere Villamil, the owner of La Jolie. Her upscale and elegant salon and spa has a gorgeous new facility on the corner of Route 206 and Leigh Avenue. They offer many wonderful services, including the scalp and shampoo treatment which is Mrs. Villamil's personal favorite. Mrs. Villamil's story begins in Cuba, where she was born. Her grandfather owned all of the Cuban car imports and Exxon businesses there. During the reign of Castro in 1968, she and her family moved to Miami, when she was just a two year old. They later moved from Miami to Passaic, New Jersey, as they had family in the area. Mrs. Villamil's

mother began attending Montclair State University, where she graduated with several Master's degrees and began work as a kindergarten educator with the local board of education. Mrs. Villamil married her high school sweetheart shortly after the couple graduated from high school. Mrs. Villamil has always been attracted to the Princeton area, so the newlyweds moved to Princeton shortly thereafter. Mrs. Villamil has been in the beauty industry for twenty five years, and purchased La Jolie from Liz Jolie seven years ago. Mrs. Villamil faced many challenges and did not feel adequately supported in developing her business. Although Liz Jolie helped her with zoning, Mrs. Villamil desperately needed more financial support. One of Mrs. Villamil's greatest desires for today's immigrants is for mentorship, which would provide more opportunities to "help immigrants develop the capacity to become functioning, social members of the community." Rather than simply provide free services, she strongly believes that minorities (especially young Hispanics) and women need more scholarship opportunities to further their education. Her advice to them would be to source out programs for education and for learning English that will then help them to find work within the community. When our conversation concluded, I didn't want to leave La Jolie. The salon is gorgeous, restful and is truly "a destination in Princeton for an experience of well being." I recommend a visit to anyone wishing to restore, heal, and energize!

Interview by Emerlee Simons

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