

I am WAGE\$®

Maria Milla

“I had to work when I was 15 years old,” said WAGE\$ participant Maria Milla. “My country, Honduras, is very difficult, very poor. I had to move to a bigger city and live with relatives to be able to study. I wanted to be a teacher, but that required day classes. I had to work during the day, so I studied something else, but my dream was always to be a teacher. When I played school as I child, I was always the teacher!” Maria’s dream came true when she moved to the United States.

Maria answered an advertisement for a child care center substitute and started learning about children, but she quickly realized how much more she needed and wanted to know. She kept working, took English (ESL) classes and then began her early childhood coursework. Maria started on the Child Care WAGE\$® Program with the NC Early Childhood Credential (four semester hours) and now has her Birth-Kindergarten Bachelor’s Degree. She has moved up the WAGE\$ scale many times, earning higher awards, and has remained at her current 5-star program since 2005. She is now only two classes away from earning her Birth to Kindergarten license.

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Maria knows how much her education and consistency mean for the children and families she serves.

“I feel like the more education we have, the better we can do,” she said. “We learn about development and how we can help children grow and learn.”

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Program helped her pay for classes; she says she couldn’t have done it otherwise. She’s proud of earning her degree, and she says WAGE\$ helped her attain that goal.

“It helped with the financial component of taking classes. WAGE\$ is a good motivator. I’m very thankful for all that WAGE\$ and my partnership do with this incentive. I love my job and I’m happy, but I don’t make much money and this incentive helps a lot of us stay in our jobs. WAGE\$ helps everybody. It helps children have the same teachers. Children feel safe, secure and happier. It helps parents feel more trust. They can leave their child with someone who has been there a long time rather than someone who comes and goes. It helps families because we don’t have to charge them more than they can pay. It helps the teachers a lot.”

Maria joked that despite her years of education in the United States, her English continues to improve with the help of the children in her class.

“I tell them to let me know if I say something wrong. They do! They correct me!” Laughing, Maria said, “Teaching is my passion. I want to stay in the classroom.”



Child Care
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