

Guadalupe Center

Creating endless possibilities through education

Tutor Corps alumna Amy Mendez has only been a Personal Banker with Wells Fargo since September, but she has already set her sights on giving back to the community by creating a family scholarship for graduating Immokalee High School seniors.

Mendez's desire to start a scholarship was sparked at an awards banquet where she received a number of scholarships as a senior at Immokalee High School. "I remember that day so vividly and how overwhelmed with joy I felt to be selected for enough scholarships to fund my entire educational pursuit," she remembers.

Mendez recently worked with staff at the Community Foundation of Collier County to craft her vision of the scholarship. "I wouldn't say that there is a targeted student population, because I encourage all students that meet the requirements to apply. The scholarship requires a 3.0 GPA, which I hope will open it up to more students" she explains, "and I think it is important that they are involved in clubs and organizations, as I was, because it helped improve my time management skills and made me more well-rounded, which is critical for college success."

The daughter of migrant farmworkers, Mendez entered Guadalupe's Tutor Corps Program as a sophomore at Immokalee High School. After graduation, she attended the University of Florida where she earned a degree in psychology.

For the Mendez family, the Tutor Corps Program became a lifeline. Older sister Ruby is currently attending the University of South Florida working on her Doctorate in Nursing after completing her Bachelor's degree in Nursing at the University of Florida. The Mendez-Guerrero Family Scholarship carries the name of both of her parents, who met in Immokalee.

Though parents of Tutor Corps students are supportive of their children going off to college, they do not have the experience to talk to them about what that experience will be like. For that reason, the mentor program is an integral part of Tutor Corps. Each student is paired with an adult who has attended college to offer guidance and support. "My mentors Rosemary and JT Albert were phenomenal!" she remembers. "They encouraged me to apply to out of state schools and pushed me out of my comfort zone, though I ultimately decided to stay in Florida. They listened to my ideas for a major and gave me advice from their own experiences. They met my family and became a part of it attending my high school graduation and my and my sister's graduation parties. I traveled to Boston, with them and they showed me around the historic city. It is still one of the greatest vacations I've been on!"

Mendez credits the Tutor Corps Program with helping her pursue higher education and graduating from her "dream university". Statistics show that only 16% percent of low-income students graduate from college, compared to a 60 percent graduation rate for their wealthier

classmates. More than 92% of Guadalupe Center's Tutor Corps students graduate from college thanks to the support they receive throughout high school and college.

"I greatly appreciated the advice and assistance given to me by Guadalupe Center's College Coordinator Jorge Perez," says Mendez. "During my senior year of high school, he guided me through the college and scholarship application processes, and then he continued to stay in touch as I adjusted to college. He made me feel comfortable enough to have difficult conversations without criticism, especially when I switched my major in college and was unsure about my plans after graduation. He was supportive as are all of the staff at the Guadalupe Center. I cannot say enough about my great experiences with the Tutor Corps Program. I plan to become a mentor so I can give back to a program that has helped me grow."