

BRIDGES

From School to Work®

SUMMER 2013



Kimberly Castro, right, rocks out with her “MVP Award” sticker. Kimberly has come a long way at Ross Dress for Less.

KIMBERLY CASTRO—PAVING THE WAY

When Kimberly Castro first enrolled with *Bridges*, she knew she had some work to do. She was extremely shy, had difficulty with mock interviews, and could not make eye contact with her Employer Representative, Fausto Mendez. Undaunted, she watched interview videos, listened to guest speakers, and practiced with friends and family members. She even practiced by herself in front of the mirror at night.

Once she felt she was ready, Kimberly went on some actual interviews, but was initially unsuccessful. Kimberly became upset and wanted to stop trying, but Mr. Mendez encouraged her to channel her frustration into motivation. Sure enough, Kimberly

landed a job at her next interview with Ross Dress for Less.

However, Kimberly still needed to work on being more vocal. According to her managers, Kimberly was really good at tidying up, but she did not communicate with her peers or customers. Mr. Mendez relayed this message to her and coached her until she got better.

Kimberly has since come a long way, as she approaches her one-year anniversary on the job. She now works in the jewelry department, which requires a high level of interaction with customers and co-workers. Ross recently conducted a “secret shopper” test on Kimberly, in which an undercover company representative

tested her on her customer service skills. Kimberly did so well that she received the “MVP Award,” which she wears proudly on her badge.

Recently, there was a management change at the branch where Kimberly works. The new management was initially hesitant to interview *Bridges* candidates, until Mr. Mendez explained to them that Kimberly was in fact part of the program. They agreed to interview the new candidates, based on Kimberly’s track record. So Kimberly is paving the way for those who come after her!

Kimberly has grown as an individual and although she has faced some obstacles, her determination has demonstrated that hard work pays off.



Jesus Lopez, at the Compton Department of Rehabilitation Office, where he meets regularly with Ivonne Silver and Darin Garcia.

JESUS LOPEZ

When Jesus Lopez first joined Bridges, he was hired by a car rental company but was let go due to tardiness. This experience had an impact on him, and he decided to change his ways. Jesus then found a job with Kimco at a warehouse distribution facility and thanks to his newfound determination, he has been with Kimco for almost one year!

Jesus recently decided to pursue a career in cooking. Employer Representative Ivonne Silver invited him to attend a “job shadow” day at LAX Marriott, where he observed a day in the life of a busy kitchen. Jesus was intrigued and decided to apply immediately. With support from Bridges, he obtained a job as a dining room attendant at the Manhattan Beach Marriott. Despite being employed for less than one month, Jesus’s supervisor scheduled him to work Father’s Day brunch, which is an extremely busy shift. He has since worked with other departments as well, such as Banquets. Jesus has kept busy by remaining with Kimco on an on-call basis, but he has made the restaurant his top priority. Jesus is on his way to making his culinary dreams come true!

JORGE MERCADO

Jorge Mercado enrolled in the *Bridges* program in August of 2012. After practicing his interviewing skills with Employer Representative Ivonne Silver, he was hired by Jiffy Lube in Downey, CA in November 2012. Jorge was thrilled at the opportunity to work with vehicles, which has been his lifelong passion. In the months that followed, Job Coach Darin Garcia worked with Jorge on his customer service, professionalism, and communication skills. Recently, Jorge informed Darin that he had successfully enrolled into automotive courses at a local occupational center. He is now preparing for the next phase of his career as an automotive technician. Jorge has been employed for almost ten months, and he attributes his success on the job directly to the Bridges program. He recently told Darin, “I just could not have done it without you and Ms. Silver!” Jorge’s next goal is to attain an Automotive Service Excellence Certification (ASE) and obtain employment with a national automotive services chain. Ms. Silver and Mr. Garcia have every confidence that he will achieve this goal.



Jorge Mercado wears his Jiffy Lube uniform with pride.