

Nubia SANCHEZ

A former immigrant helps families bridge old and new worlds.

BY KATE LAPIDES

EIGHT AND A HALF years ago, Nubia Sanchez was a new immigrant to Summit County, fearful because she didn't know the language or American culture. Last November, she was recognized as the Outstanding Professional in a Nonprofit Organization at The Summit Foundation's 24th Annual Philanthropy Awards.

How does a woman make a journey like that in less than a decade? In part, with the help of Summit County's Family Intercultural Resource Center (FIRC), a non-profit organization that works with Summit County families and individuals in need of emergency assistance and parenting support. The organization provides emergency housing, medical and clothing assistance to local families experiencing sudden financial crisis; operates a food bank; offers job training and other life skills support; and offers bilingual outreach programs in early childhood education and parenting. FIRC also hires former recipients of its services to staff outreach positions and its fundraising thrift store, Summit County Thrift and Treasure.

For Sanchez, the connection to FIRC was especially fortuitous, allowing her to fulfill a longtime passion for community service work. As a Parent Educator in FIRC's Families United Program, she provides monthly home visits to families with children five years old and younger. During the visits, Sanchez helps by providing information and encouragement to help their children develop optimally during crucial early years. The Families United Program serves nearly 200 children monthly, and is based off of the nationally recognized Parents as Teachers curriculum.

"My job is to bring support and motivation to parents so they can improve the bond with their



Nubia Sanchez shares a smile with a client while testing her comprehensions of shapes at the Family Intercultural Resource Center's office in Silverthorne, Colorado.

One of my greatest rewards is seeing the kids I worked with when they were little who are now succeeding in middle school.

child and provide a safe and caring home for their children to thrive," Sanchez says.

Sanchez also works with FIRC's Mamacitas program, a social support group that supports Latina mothers who want to take part in Summit County's outdoor activities and explore topics ranging from nutrition to immigrants' rights. Both roles are deep-

ly fulfilling to Sanchez and also play an important role in Summit County's ongoing integration of new immigrants and cultures.

"It's amazing that a small place in the Rocky Mountains has a collection of people from all over the world. This presents a wonderful opportunity for us to learn from each other's cultures and values and grow together as one community," she says.

"I like to be able to help families find the necessary tools and resources to become better parents. I am also honored to lead the Mamacitas group and help Latino women realize their strengths. One of my greatest rewards is seeing the kids I worked with when they were little who are now succeeding in middle school. I love knowing that my work makes a positive difference in our families' lives."