

Promoting Excellent Customer Service is all in the Family for Sergio, Maria and Brenda

CHM Employees shine together as part of 5-STAR College

For the Valenzuela family, the CARING in CARING Housing Ministries (CHM) is more than just a name, it's who they are.

Not only are CHM employees Sergio Valenzuela, his wife, Maria and daughter, Brenda all alumni of Front Porch's 5-STAR College customer service leadership program, they also serve as model ambassadors.



More than a seminar or training program to teach service excellence, 5-STAR College is a cultural commitment that provides Front Porch employees, including CHM, with leadership tools to apply at their communities to better meet the needs of residents. Customer Satisfaction, Integrity in Relationships, Individual Initiative, Expression and Creativity, Teamwork and Trust, Fiscal Responsibility, Innovative Services (and Products), the Front Porch Core Values, are what makes 5-STAR College STARs (graduates) who they are.

“What starts as a training program regularly ends up changing the lives of each of its participants,” said Lauren Moulton-Beaudry, director of ethics and education at Front Porch. “5-STAR College is focused on line-staff, many of whom are aspiring managers.”

For Sergio, it all started with a leap of faith when, after years of declining the offer to become a “STAR,” he finally accepted. “They already asked me too many times so I didn’t want to say no,” he chuckled. “I was willing to explore if I had something to offer.”

Originally hired as a janitor, Sergio now works as resident maintenance at Good Shepherd Manor, one of more than 25 affordable housing communities managed by CHM. Through encouragement from his supervisor, family, and peers to become a STAR, Sergio gained confidence in speaking and initiative in communication with residents and co-workers alike.

If Individual Initiative in saying “yes” was Sergio’s motivation to join the program, Customer Satisfaction and Integrity in Relationships was Maria’s.

“I was nervous because my English wasn’t good.” She jokes that her public speaking skills were a minus 1 on 0-10 scale. Now, as 5-STAR College ambassador, Maria facilitates communication between different CHM communities, including her own, Lutheran Towers, on how to serve and make their respective communities better.

Following the one-year STAR program, participants may graduate and become ambassadors, which gives them the opportunity to put the skills they developed into action. “Now I encourage all my co-workers to do it,” Maria says as her daughter smiles with pride.

Brenda Valenzuela, the youngest and newest ambassador in her family of STARS, reminisces on how she watched her parents grow and develop their leadership skills. “I remember watching them and wondering when it was going to be my turn,” she said. Not long after she was hired as an administrative assistant at CHM-managed Seaview Lutheran Plaza, Brenda got her wish.

Going in with nothing but glowing reviews from her parents and sincere optimism, Brenda made the most of her experience, even performing her skit ‘How Might We ... ?’ with her fellow teammates in front of a room full of employees from Front Porch and CHM communities. Proud smiles spread across her parents’ faces when Brenda talks about her skit and how she applies its message of experimenting and proactive problem-solving to her work at Seaview.

Sergio sums up his experience as an ambassador by simply saying “family.” Having his wife and daughter on stage with him fills him with pride and motivates him to recruit more families like his to join the 5-STAR College team. “We’re glad to work with Front Porch and CARING Housing Ministries because they are family.”