

Connecting With Yolennis Mella

"They say a person needs just three things to be truly happy in this world: someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for." — Tom Bodett



DONATE TO CHILD CARE SOLUTIONS SO WE CAN SUPPORT MORE CHILD CARE PROVIDERS LIKE YOLENNIS!



The Joy of New Beginnings

Yolennis Mella's Story & The Onondaga Refugee Home-Based Child Care Microenterprise Development Program

Most of us cannot imagine relocating to a foreign country where you are unfamiliar with customs, language, culture, etc. Imagine trying to start a child care business under these circumstances. Imagine being a parent who needs child care so you can work or go to school. These things are difficult under normal circumstances. For the refugee/immigrant population in Central New York, they can be close to impossible. Knowing that there is a tremendous need and demand for child care for these courageous people; Child Care Solutions eagerly participated in the Onondaga Refugee Home-Based Child Care Microenterprise Development Program. This program, operated by Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, aims to create a network of child care providers for these community members and allowed us to work with inspiring people like Yolennis Mella.

Yolennis and her husband are originally from Cuba. Knowing that they wanted to live in the United States, her husband, a practicing physician, applied for a visa and entered into the Cuban Immigration Lottery. In 2009 when Yolennis was three months pregnant, his name was chosen from the lottery, and he was able to immigrate to the United States. Unfortunately, he had to leave Yolennis and their unborn baby behind. Eventually, he found residence with his sister in Syracuse and found work in the kitchen at a local hospital. Four years after he left Cuba, on May 31, 2013, Yolennis was able to join him in the United States with their child, and they began their life in Syracuse together.

Like many typical American families, the Mella's needed dual incomes to support themselves. Yolennis began work as a child care assistant, but owning and operating her own child care business became her goal after she saw a flyer about the Microenterprise Development Program at Catholic Charities.

Working with Catholic Charities & Child Care Solutions staff members Yolennis began the process of becoming a registered family child care provider. She enrolled in our 15 hour Spanish Health & Safety Class where she learned the skills and practices necessary to create a safe child care environment that provides freedom from harm and offers security for children to play, develop and learn. Yolennis and her husband moved into their own home that was appropriate for a family child care program. She completed her orientation, health & safety training, fingerprinting and application. She then began working with our registration team member Liza Hernandez (see previous page) who did her initial inspection, and she opened for business.

Completing the registration process for family child care programs can be difficult for English speakers. For non-English speakers, it can be overwhelming. Yolennis tackled this process with determination and perseverance. She sought out help from interpreters to ensure that she completed forms perfectly. She did research on her own; reading books and using the internet to learn about developmentally appropriate practice. She provides an example of what it means to have a goal and go for it. The staff of Child Care Solutions is so happy to be working with her so she can provide the high-quality child care that we know all children need and deserve.