

Hispanic Development Corp. Offering A Helping Hand To Newcomers

When Maria Cruz Echavarria first stepped foot in the offices of New Community Corporation's Hispanic Development Corporation, the Venezuelan native didn't know quite what to expect.

"At the time, I was undocumented, my legal status in this country was not in order," recalled Echavarria, 64, who was living in a boarding home and working as a home caretaker for an elderly individual.

A friend eventually introduced her to the staff at Hispanic Development Corporation, which is where her journey to legal status began.

"The process was fairly quick. I met a wonderful man and got married and because he was from Puerto Rico, I obtained my papers," said Echavarria, who came to the United States in 1998.

"Unfortunately, my husband returned to his native country due to an accident. His family took him back to help him regain his health, and I was not able to follow him. My marriage ended, but in 2005 my status was clear and I became a legal resident of the United States."

Now it was time to improve her language skills. She was invited to join an English as a Second Language class at Hispanic Development and for a time did.