



ILLINOIS COALITION  
AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

One Mission, One Voice

## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Spring 2014

## PROJECT UPDATE

### Survivor Finds Independence in Opening Her Own Gift Shop

When Dulce Carrera packed up her two small children and left her abusive partner, she only had \$300 in her pocket and a month's worth of diapers and formula for her new baby. Several years later, she has opened her own gift shop, Sillyta, in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago and is finding financial independence one step at a time.

Dulce came to Chicago with her four year old son from Durango, Durango, Mexico. She arrived on a fiancé VISA with the intention of marrying her partner. "Those first years were good," she said. "It was when I got pregnant that things began to change." When she was expecting her daughter, he started to grow emotionally abusive and began isolating her. Then one day, he told her that he no longer planned to marry her.

At first, he told her to move back to Mexico. She was alone, with a child and another on the way. Then, after her daughter was born, he became jealous and more aggressive. He threatened that if she left, he would take away the baby. Things began to escalate. He said he would marry her, but then told her that if she ever left him, he would kill her. She knew she had to leave.

Through advice from friends, Dulce sought help and support from Connections from Abused Women and



Dulce Carrera (right) with her CAWC advocate, Roxanna Licóna (left) at Sillyta.

their Children (CAWC) in Chicago. "This was the best thing that ever happened to me." She attends the domestic violence support group and advocates helped her find an attorney who assisted her through a difficult, two year custody case.

During their relationship, her partner had stolen all of the savings she had put aside for her children. He had taken away her car. However, Dulce knew she had to find a way to support herself and her children. At first, she found small ways to earn income. "I said, Dulce, you know how to do make-up." With that, she began earning extra income by putting make-up on friends, selling homemade baked goods, and cleaned at a local beauty salon.

## Survivor Finds Independence, continued

Two years ago, she decided she needed to do something more. Dulce thought of things she could make and sell and chose small crafts for girls because she could see a market for them and she knew she could make them. She started making small hair bows with fabric. A friend helped invest in her business and they began to create a website ([www.sillytacorp.com](http://www.sillytacorp.com)) to sell her crafts online. Over the next year, she added handmade hats and



The first hair bow Dulce made.

scarves and was selling them at local flea markets. Then, she began to look for a store.

They found a location and opened the store in December of 2013. She named the shop, Sillyta, a Latina play on the English word, “silly”. The store focuses mostly on items for women and children. She sells handmade crafts and home decorations, accessories, party decorations, and does customized special orders. She sells some new clothes and shoes and when

neighbors asked, she started stocking some resale items.

“I want people to feel like they are in a party. I want everyone who comes in here to feel happiness,” said Dulce. She hasn’t stopped dreaming. Her ultimate goal is to open more stores and to earn enough money to purchase the next door building to hosts parties.

*Sillyta is located at:  
3609 W Armitage, Chicago, IL.*

## Career Club Supports Survivors In The Job Search Process

As domestic violence survivors move towards a life of independence, one of their first steps is seeking stable and sustainable employment. However, for many, this is one of their biggest obstacles. Experiences with domestic violence may have left them with a difficult work history, lack of self confidence, or fears of how to find a job that is safe. For the third year, ICADV has received a grant from the Allstate Foundation to fund a Career Empowerment Curriculum for survivors. The grant currently funds eight local domestic violence programs throughout Illinois.

The Career Empowerment Curriculum was written by Women

Employed Inc., the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and The Allstate Foundation. It consists of five sections and is coupled with basic financial education. It covers topics like staying safe in your job search, basic networking, explaining gaps in employment, and the difference between a job and a career.

As part of the grant, each program will be implementing a short evaluation tool for survivors who have finished the curriculum. ICADV worked with all eight programs to create an evaluation that reflects the diverse experiences of these survivors. The information gained will be shared with all other

member domestic violence programs as they plan to implement their own employment work with survivors. The evaluation is just being implemented, but the

feedback is already positive.

Survivors loved the information on preparing for an interview and the tips they received on resume writing. They reported that the most helpful aspects of the groups have been the support they receive from one another. One client reported her favorite part of Career Club was “understanding my strengths and weaknesses and what to expect for myself.”

*The ICADV Economic Empowerment Project is financially assisted by: The Allstate Foundation.*

## Survivors Receive Self-Sufficiency Grants

ICADV awards small grants to survivors from the Emergency Assistance for Victims Fund. Survivors of domestic violence currently working with an ICADV member program can apply for up to \$200 for funds to help her reach self sufficiency.

Recent grants were given to assist survivors in a variety of ways. One woman was able to purchase a license for a food truck and the supplies needed to start her own business. Another client was able to renew her cosmetology license. Two survivors used the money from these grants to assist in applying for legal status and get the documentation needed for the immigration process. In each of these cases, the grant was able to assist these women with a small purchase that would help them find economic stability and independence.

Applications for the Spring 2014 cycle have been received and will be awarded soon.

*To donate to the Emergency Assistance for Victims Fund, visit [www.ilcadv.org/Get\\_Involved/donate.asp](http://www.ilcadv.org/Get_Involved/donate.asp).*

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ICADV is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

## Domestic Violence And The Affordable Healthcare Act

The New Year brought the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This landmark legislation makes it possible for everyone to have access to healthcare. There are also new provisions in this law written specifically to assist survivors of domestic violence.

Starting this year, most people who do not have some type of basic health coverage will have to pay a fee known as the “individual shared responsibility payment.” However, survivors of domestic violence may not be required to pay this fee. A survivor who has recently experienced abuse may qualify for a ‘hardship exemption’.

The ACA also prohibits insurances to deny coverage because of a pre-existing condition based on domestic violence history. Prior to this, Illinois had already enacted a law prohibiting domestic violence from being used as a pre-existing condition, but clients from other states may have experienced this discrimination.

Finally, the new law also implements intimate partner violence screening and counseling. Both screening and counseling will be covered for all adolescent and

adult women. Research suggests that identifying past or current domestic violence can help prevent further abuse and lead to improved health.

## Filing Taxes With An ITIN

Often, an immigrant who does not have residency status or legal documentation may have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). While this is not a Social Security Number and does not give this immigrant legal status, it can open up access to some resources.

With an ITIN, immigrants can claim the Child Tax Credit if the child is a U.S. Citizen, a U.S. National or U.S. Resident. With the Child Tax Credit, parents can claim up to \$1,000 per child. Filing for and having an ITIN will not affect immigration status. The IRS will not turn over information to Immigration services because someone has filed for an ITIN.

There are many organizations that will assist clients in filing for an ITIN number. Survivors should think through the process with a domestic violence advocate and carefully to decide if this is a safe choice. However, if it is a good choice, it may provide the survivor with further opportunities.