



Alumna Profile: Johanna Rodriguez, LICSW

Johanna Rodriguez came to Salem in 2006 from the Dominican Republic to complete high school and college. Her father, mother and brother stayed behind in the DR so that her brother could finish middle school. Johanna lived in The Point neighborhood with her aunt, and her mother traveled between the DR and Salem. LEAP, then called Cyberspace, was nearby Johanna’s home, and quickly “became my home away from home,” Johanna says. Soon her cousins joined her, and “we all went there after school and didn’t leave until it closed.”

2023

Works for Salem Public Schools as a City Connects Counselor

In her junior year Johanna entered the College Success Program. While at LEAP she worked to improve her English with volunteer Kelly Quinn, at the time a student at Salem State University’s School of Social Work. Kelly was studying Spanish, so she and Johanna started journaling— Kelly in Spanish and Johanna in English. They would trade journals to translate and find out what the other was writing. Says Johanna, “I would love to see those journals now—I had some hard times then!” To this day, Kelly who herself is a social worker in Salem schools, remains an important mentor to Johanna. When Johanna graduated from Salem High she attended North Shore Community College and Northeastern University, where she studied human services.

2019

Masters in Social Work from Salem State University

After graduating in 2016 Johanna enrolled at Salem State University for her Master of Social Work. Her studies there were briefly paused for the birth of her daughter. Johanna finished her studies because “slow or fast I was determined to get my master’s.” And she did.

2015

Graduated from Northeastern University

Johanna works as a City Connects Coordinator/Guidance Counselor at Salem’s Collins Middle School. City Connects provides holistic resources to families. In this capacity Johanna says she is “recruiting students for Expanding Horizons,” LEAP’s afterschool and summer program. As a guidance counselor, she works specifically with eighth graders to help them transition to high school. “This is the kind of social work I want to do,” she says, “this is where I want to stay.”

2012

Graduated from North Shore Community College

Johanna wishes all immigrant newcomers knew about LEAP. She tells them, “You don’t know what you’re missing!”

2006

Came to Salem and started going to LEAP

LEAP is proud to have Johanna Rodriguez as an alumna!