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Elevate Miami Brings Opportunities to Immigrants Local Resident's Life Changes with Computer Knowledge

MIAMI, FL, March 25, 2009 - Nine years ago, Guyriano Charles, a radio journalist in Haiti, typed his radio news broadcasts on a typewriter. His news stories uncovering corrupt practices prompted death threats by local police. After being granted political asylum by the United States government, he came to live in Miami.

From his years as a journalist, he knew how to put stories together and was a very fast typist. He also knew about what was happening in the world. He was a very educated man. Yet with all his knowledge and experience in the world, he still couldn't help his son with most of his homework. His son was only in the second grade.

"You need to understand how computers work so you can help with homework," Charles said.

Now in the third grade, his son is growing up. Charles wants to give him a good life. But to bring a better life with more opportunity, he knew that he needed to make more money. Charles tried to get a better job that paid better money. He tried to mail in applications to many jobs. Yet, all this work applying for jobs got him nothing. Finding a job in Miami was not easy.



Instructor Azucena Hernandez works with Guyriano Charles during class at the Technology Learning Center at Curtis Park.

"Every job you apply for asks if you have experience using computers. If you know computer programs you have a higher percentage chance of getting a job," Charles said.

Charles then realized that to land a better job he had to learn about computers. A determined man, he looked at all the computer classes offered in Miami. He looked and looked, but found the classes too expensive for his limited budget. Just to

offer a decent life to his son and wife, Charles had to pay for their home. He had to pay for food, clothes and school for his own son. On his meager income, he had no money to spare for his own professional development.

Charles became frustrated because he saw the world around him changing so fast.

“Everything is about technology,” Charles said.

Everyone, including his son, was walking away from him into the Internet, into the computer, into the digital world. He couldn't get a good job. He couldn't help his son with his homework.

One morning, while reading the newspaper, Charles read that Elevate Miami, a City of Miami digital literacy program, was offering free classes at Curtis Park in the Allapattah neighborhood close to his home. He signed up in June of 2008 and, since then, has learned many things including how to navigate the Internet. He learned to apply for jobs online and ultimately landed a job as a security officer.

“When you apply for jobs in the mail, it takes some time for the employers to get the resume. When you do it online, they get it right away and if they want more information, they can ask right away. It was so fast,” Charles said.

On the Internet, he was also able to apply for Florida KIDCARE so that his son could receive free health insurance. For the his job applications, he was able to write his resume and cover letter using Microsoft Word, which he learned in one of the classes. He also learned how to write financial reports in Microsoft Excel, and he's currently taking an introductory course in Microsoft Power Point.

Now he is inspired to go to Miami Dade College to study computer science and become a web developer.

After only taking classes at Curtis Park for less than a year, Charles is so grateful that he is learning about computers because you need to know how to use computers “for life, for life, for the future. It's like when you finish eating, you have to drink water. You cannot live without computers,” Charles said.

About Elevate Miami:

Created under the leadership of Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, Elevate Miami prepares all residents and businesses of Miami for a leadership position in the global economy, establishing public and private partnerships that facilitate affordable technology, including mobile and low-cost internet access, employable skills sets and economic opportunities for all Miamians. The program is a comprehensive, life-long approach focused on the accessibility and affordability of technology and free training for youth, adults, senior citizens and small businesses. For more information, visit us at www.elevatemiami.com or contact 305-416-1538.

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