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**Financial Empowerment Survivor Stories**

**“I Am Casa Myrna:” Nina’s Story**

**Nina** is originally from Guatemala, and has three teenage sons, one of whom has special needs. In Guatemala, Nina’s husband physically abused her, the children and Nina’s elderly parents. Her husband’s family members also abused her children. Nina came to the United States with her husband, leaving her family in Guatemala until she could help them come here safely.

Upon arrival in the Boston area, the abuse from her husband escalated. He would make several trips back to Guatemala each year and continued to threaten her family. His family members also continued to abuse her children.

Fearing for her safety, Nina contacted Casa Myrna and was able to move to our Mary L. Foreman House emergency shelter.

While living at our residential program, Nina received a full range of Supportive Services from Casa Myrna, including self-sufficiency skills, housing assistance, legal advocacy and counseling. Working with our Self-Sufficiency Specialist in the SOAR (Stability, Opportunities, Achievements, Results) Program was key to making positive changes in Maria’s life. When she arrived in the United States, Nina spoke no English and could not read, having gone to school only through the second grade. Casa Myrna’s Self-Sufficiency Specialist, Paola, arranged for her to take Spanish literacy courses and helped Nina enroll in an English as a Second Language course at the YMCA.

Paola also helped Nina build her resume and develop interviewing skills. Nina found a well-paying job and was able to send money back to her children in Guatemala. She also divorced her husband with support and referrals from Casa Myrna’s Legal Advocacy program.

Nina is now proficient in English, works at the restaurant Chipotle and lives in her own home in Somerville. Her three sons live with her. She continues to meet with our Self Sufficiency Specialist to strengthen her budgeting skills. Nina is thrilled with her accomplishments and excited to continue her journey. She proudly states, “I am Casa Myrna.”