

Hello my name is Ana Ballesteros Lemus. I am from Colombia and lived in Lincoln for almost 4 years. I'm married and have two children. My oldest was able to graduate from Lincoln High School and my daughter went to Culler Middle School. My husband had a student visa but it expired and we had to return to Colombia

I want to take this time to honor Mr. Ever Preciado who works at Culler Middle School. I am not so sure about his title but it's something about "Family Involvement Community Specialist" (not sure, sorry). Mr. Preciado is a person that any mother would like to have as a son, any woman as a husband and any kid as a father (with all respect to him and his loved ones). Before I nominate Mr. Preciado to prestigious award I did my research in Lincoln so I can provide you with more detailed information of all or most of his work with the Lincoln community at large

Mr. Preciado is a man with a great character, integrity, honestly (the list goes on) and always looking for ways to improve his community not only to Latinos but also to all or most people he touches. He was the lead thinker to open Family Literacy at Culler Middle School around 2013 in partnership with Lincoln Literacy, Culler CLC. Because of this program founded by Mr. Preciado at Culler, I was able to learn the English language. I remembered him handing out flyers in the parking lot to ELL students' family like me (that day was raining and I told myself what is that crazy man doing under the rain), I received multiple phone calls from him asking to save the date for Culler Adult Family Literacy. I started to come to learn English and I met 22 other people from multiple countries around the world, Iraq, Guatemala, Mexico, China, Russia etc. I also met Sandra Rojo who was another angel in my life. Mr. Preciado had 3 rules for us adult's English learner and I will never forget them: 1. Participate in your students' school activities, parents/teachers conferences, games etc., 2. Make yourself visible in the community where you live, attend community events; volunteer your skills, etc. 3. Talk to your children day in and day out, practice what you have learned with them, shared with your children cultural roots stories, etc. Mr. Preciado was always telling us to promote our cultural roots proudly in a positive way so we can teach other that Latinos have values, integrity, trustworthy and hardworking people. Mr. Preciado was also a person that with the assistance with Dr. Czaplá and Ms. Nicken (I think I misspelled her last name) promoted Spanish Native class at Culler. I remembered Mr. Preciado asking me to have a family member of mine sending him third to fifth grade Spanish books from Colombia so Ms. Nicken and him can come out with a curriculum to teach advance Spanish to native speaking Spanish students. My understanding is that Culler started the program and now it spread to at least two other middle schools. Mr. Preciado said "it's not possible that our native speaking Spanish students are learning colors and numbers when they already speak Spanish. They need to learn how to properly read and write poems and text books." Mr. Preciado is a wise man. It made sense because my daughter when she got to Lincoln, she had finished 5th grade in Colombia so she knew how to read and write in Spanish.

I also know that Mr. Preciado had served in El Centro de las Americas Board. Had worked with Apple Seed in favor to Latino families rights, he had sponsor Latino clubs in his school, had worked with UNL to bring middle and high school Latino students to different events concerning higher education. He is very active in other organization like Clinic with a Heart as a volunteer interpreter. We the Latinos that know Mr. Preciado are very proud of him and he is truly an inspiration to many of us as well as an excellent motivational speaker. Many kids take Mr. Preciado, as a father figure due to his patience,

words of wisdom, job and time that he spends with young students not only at LPS but also outside of LPS is immeasurable. Like Mr. Preciado said “ I see my payback every April and May of each year when I see students go to high school better prepared, multiple invitations of former students who are inviting me to their high school or college graduation.”

Before I left Lincoln, Nebraska, Mr. Preciado told me, “ you are ready to go back to Colombia an open a business in a touristic city, you speak English, computer and have a great customer service personally, and you will do well.” Here I am with a small business in Tayrona National Park, Santa Marta. I sell swimsuits and beach accessories; I have employed two people and hoping to open another store in the Tayrona resort in April of next year. I’m a bilingual English/Spanish small businesswoman. Like Mr. Preciado says “I was born to be a head and not a tail”.

I am sorry if this essay is too long but I get excited.

God bless you all if you need to get in contact with me please email me at anaballesteroslemus@yahoo.com.