

President Bush Meets with Training, Internships, Exchanges and Scholarship (TIES) Recipients

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THE PRESIDENT: I'd like to thank you all for joining us. One of the best things America can do is help people realize their dreams. The best way to realize dreams is through education.

I'm so happy that you all have joined me to share with me your experiences from one of our most effective programs, which is a program all aimed at improving the human condition. I'm proud of the citizens of the United States who show great concern for citizens in our neighborhood. And I thank you for coming to share your experiences.

Victor, would you like to start? I mentioned you in un discurso en los Estados Unidos about the benefits of this program. I understand you went to Bettendorf Community College -- Scott Community College? Okay. Well, tell us, Victor, your story.

MR. L PEZ RUIZ: I want to express my deepest appreciation for this opportunity. Thank you, Mr. President, for sharing the story in your speech last week. Your words fill me so happy. And I have the encouragement to keep working in my community. I want to express my gratitude, as well, to Becas Cas (phonetic) and USAID for selecting me for this scholarship in 2004. I received also an associate degree in international business and trade at Scott Community College, Bettendorf, Iowa.

And finally, I would like to thank everyone that supported me and helped me for this opportunity, my dreams come true -- especially my family. I had to face many challenges to get an education, but I learned that with the right attitude and a lot of effort and commitment, everything is possible.

At the age of 12 I had to leave my community to be able to study high school. I faced several obstacles, including the fact that I did not speak Spanish, because my language is Tzotzil. Now I speak three languages. I had to work to support my education. This is how I was able to study. I still continue fighting for my dream today, which makes me value them even more.

I really enjoyed my time in the U.S.A. I lived with a nice family for the first year. We had a hard time trying to communicate to each other, but quickly I felt like one of their family. I still talk with them, and although I miss my Mexican food -- (laughter) -- I thought I would only be eating hamburger and pizza. (Laughter.) My American family introduced me to delicious food and I gained weight. From the U.S.A. culture, I learned to value organization, civic responsibility -- and respect and tolerance, to be able to work with others.

I did an internship in a coffee production company in Bentondorf, to use the skills that I was learning in commerce and administration. These same skills have helped me to start a small family-run Internet cafe and bakery in Comitán, Chiapas. I also volunteer with two associations, one is a local coffee company made up of indigenous people -- coffee growers. They assist with financial management and human resources, assist them in possessing the -- certificate and serve as a translator. I am also continuing my education in bachelor degree in accounting at Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.

I want to invite Mexican young people to come together and commit to their community and our country. Education is the only means to improve our quality of life and achieve peace, social peace in the entire world.

Once again, thank you for this scholarship program. I hope the U.S.A. government will continue to support this program so that other young people can have the same opportunity that I have had. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Victor. What was the name of the family in Bentondorf?

MR. L PEZ RUIZ: Peter and Mary Shaffer (phonetic.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I thank them. I hope they feel good about the fact that they helped you. There's a lot of American families that have great compassion for people around the world. And thank you for sharing the story.

Marcela. You went to Texas.

MS. RUIZ: I went to Texas. Good morning, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen. Being a small business owner is more than just a job or as a way to take a living. It's a calling in life. The power of having an idea, taking a risk, and starting a small business that fulfills a need in the marketplace, and that creating jobs is truly magical. In Mexico, there exists a very strong entrepreneurial spirit, just like in the United States, where men and women from all over the country are ready to engage their God-given abilities, work hard, and improve the life of their families.

I have dedicated my life to helping businessmen and women in the state of Aguascalientes live their dreams and start their own small businesses. My center, CEINNOVA, was started in 2001 and has since helped over 300 small businesses start and prosper, which has resulted in the creation of hundreds of jobs and improved the lives of countless families.

A key factor in the CEINNOVA SBDC success was having the opportunity to participate in a training program offered by the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara and the University of Texas at San Antonio, and supported by USAID. The diplomatic training program shared a small business counseling and training best practices from the 1,100 centers from U.S. small business development network. This training not only helped us for better assist the entrepreneurs of Aguascalientes, but it also linked up with counterparts in the

U.S. and helped us support a growing Mexican association of SBDC now led by the Universidad de (inaudible).

On behalf of the many businessmen and women that we have helped, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the American people for supporting us. I am very proud of the work of CEINNOVA SBBC and the Mexican Small Business Development Center Network are doing here in Mexico to grow the small business sector, create jobs, and improving the life of its community.

Thank you very much.

THE PRESIDENT: Very good. Thank you all very much. Thanks. We'll eat a little breakfast now where we can continue our discussion.