

Celebrate Success with Alicia Salazar ~ WIN Graduate July, 2008
Recipient of *Emerging Voice of Hope* Award from Champions of Respect, 2009



Alicia Salazar's harmonious, balanced life is dramatically different from the one she lived before coming to WIN.

"Remembering where I was, there's no comparison to where I am now," Alicia says, with buoyant self-assurance. "WIN restored my confidence, independence and strength. "It truly helps you win!" She can recall the very worst part of her life, before she left her abusive marriage. "I remember sitting in my home — my husband had been gone three weeks and I didn't know where he was. I didn't have any money for diapers or food and I remember sitting in the corner, asking God for help.

"I met my husband in church and he seemed like a good man. We were married two years and then, overnight, he changed and alcohol came into my life through him." The mother of three took the critical first step of getting herself and her children away from her husband, but didn't have access to resources for making the important changes her life needed.

"I had no vehicle, no career, not even my own place to live," she says, and she didn't fit the criteria for most educational programs because she wanted to train to be a hairdresser. "I had a hard time finding anyone to help me get through it. Without income, I couldn't do it and welfare won't help you unless it's something they think is a good career." Happily for Alicia, WIN's program for helping women includes a requirement that a client be working toward an educational goal.

Alicia graduated from the WIN program July 15, 2008. In the same month, she completed her cosmetology studies. She now works at a Snip N' Clip in Wichita. "I love it!" she says with excitement. "WIN helped me go to school." She also loves the changes she has been able to make in her life, through WIN. Besides secure employment, the Wichita native shares a home not far from her extended family with her two daughters and son, ages 6-8. WIN helped her get approval for Section 8 housing.

"I'm really happy, my children are happy, and things are going OK — and I just bought my first car, a 2003 Mercury Sable," she says. The family's stability plays itself out in examples large and small. "Considering what my kids have been through, you might expect them to rebel or act out, but they never have. My children do very well in school. My 7-year-old was on honor roll twice this year, and my son got free "I Earned It" passes from his school that let us go to the zoo, Exploration Place, Cowtown and Botanica free for a year. We'd never been to any of them." She also enjoys taking the children to play in the free water parks and to movies at the Palace. And they go to church together. "We have a real stable life," she says.

Besides all the structure and support of the WIN program, Alicia also gives credit to fellow participants. "I do return to WIN when there is a situation and I need some advice in a certain area. They are always still there for me — and they are like that with anyone who's been in the program. If they can help, they will," said Alicia.