

She Survived Sexual Abuse and Cancer to Dedicate Herself to Children's Services



Ruby Guillén 19 years as a Children's Social Worker (Soudi Jiménez)

By: Soudi Jimenez

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At an early age, she was scarred by trauma and was struck later by a deadly disease, cancer. These adversities did not tarnish her future, they motivated her, and she realized her services could make a difference for others around her.

“You cannot point your finger and blame,” explained Ruby Guillen, in reference to the abuse she suffered in childhood. “I know everything I do will have an effect on others, that’s the reason I decided to help people.”

She applies her outlook on life to her daily work, which starts at 4 p.m. and can extend to the early morning hours. “Sometimes I’m done at 4, 5, or 6 a.m.” she assured.

For the past 11 years she has worked this shift for the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) as a social worker, she covers the 88 cities in the jurisdiction of LA County.

“We receive cases nightly, sometimes one or two” she stated. When a report is received we have to go to hospitals, police or fire stations, agencies that generally call in these child abuse reports.

While she performs her duties of aiding children who might be victims of physical, psychological and/or sexual abuse, she recollects her own history.

“I remember details,” said 49 year-old Guillen, going back to her childhood. “I was two years old” she added, pausing during her narration. Without a hint of distress, she points out that it all started with a family member. “It was my grandfather” she said.

“I’m showing you how much I love you, but in secret, you can’t tell anyone” she recalls of the ensuing dirty tricks of using candy, chocolates and toys so she would be quiet. The sexual abuse continued until she was 12 years old, when her grandfather died.

That silence turned into a burden, and when she turned 15 years old, instead of speaking about what happened, she tried to commit suicide. She took a knife and proceeded to cut her arms and stomach.

She ended up disclosing the reasons behind her attempt to law enforcement, and this is why she was removed from her parents and ended up in the hands of the LA County foster care system. “My father and mother could not protect me,” she affirmed.

In the end, that split gave her a shimmer of hope. In 1997, she received her Degree in Social Work from California State University, Long Beach. This degree helped her become a DCFS social worker, determined to make a difference for at risk children.

Four years after receiving her Master’s of Social Work, this social worker observed how her life was slipping through her hands like sand. The doctor bluntly gave her the diagnosis. She had cervical cancer. “He told me I was going to die in six months,” she said.



The medical exams turned into a routine and every three months she would go for check-ups. She endured the treatment for five years. Now, when she sees the surgery scar on her stomach, it serves as reminder to value life.

“Every problem I had was nothing,” said the social worker of almost 19 years.

In her free time, Guillen has created Humanistic Technologies Inc (HTI), a company that has developed 12 mobile applications, with the objective to guarantee child safety and to prevent bullying in school, among other issues.



“I had the opportunity to blame the whole world,” she reflected when she recalls what she has survived; however, she decided to turn the page. “It’s my responsibility to manage my life and do whatever is possible to help,” she highlighted.

In 1984 the White House declared March as Social Work Month. There are 3,825 social workers in L.A. County. The National Association of Social Workers has 132,000 members, who are recognized for their service to the defenseless.

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