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My parents always said that they wanted me to have better opportunities in life than they had had. For years, I had heard about his training as an X-ray technician at Behrhorst and the influence that that had on him. At Behrhorst he found a model not only for helping people develop their talents and skills, but also for learning how to serve others, the community. He saw that sharing what we have with others is the way to live. He saw that noble idea put into practice. When I heard these stories, I knew that I too wanted to use my talents to help others.

My father often said to me, “Be open to opportunities. Think big. Think beyond Comalapa.” I remembered that advice when I needed to find a place to do my high school internship in accounting. I could have stayed in Comalapa, but I decided to try some place new. My father suggested that we visit the Behrhorst Hospital which he had talked about so often. He first asked his friend, the X-ray technician, Emilio, whom he could speak with about my getting an internship at Behrhorst. Emilio introduced him to Licdo. Marcelino Vasquez, the director. Happily, I was accepted!

How frightening it was for me to travel from Comalapa. I had to take a pill every day before I got on the bus so that I wouldn't vomit because of my nervousness. I was entering a new world, and I felt very shy.

There were three of us interns in accounting, more than were really needed. After a couple weeks, I was reassigned to work in the pharmacy, especially working on record keeping. What doors this opened for me! Here I made a really great friendship with Juanita, the pharmacist. She not only began to teach me a lot about medicines, she also invited me to eat with her and her friends. She brought me into the group. I have to tell you that after my two-month internship, I was sad to leave Behrhorst.

Once I graduated from high school in 1993, my next challenge was finding a job. Again, both my parents supported me in this process. My mother, who incidentally, cannot read and write, sacrificed and bought me a new corte (skirt) and said, “You need to look good for your interviews.” My father accompanied me to visits to two organizations, neither of which hired me. So I decided to stay in Comalapa, working in the office of a cooperative. But the hours were long and the pay was poor. I felt discouraged as a high school graduate without a decent job.

But that changed on March 10th, in the evening, when the boyfriend of my friend brought a letter from Juanita, the pharmacist at Behrhorst. He hinted, "I think there's some good news in this letter!" I laughed and cried as I read Juanita's news that there was an opening in the Behrhorst pharmacy, and she had put forth my name as a candidate. Of course, I had to compete with two other candidates, but I was selected. Thus, on the 14th of March, I began my new job, working with dear Juanita once again.

After a while, I was transferred to the walk-in clinic, as receptionist. At that time, Dr. Leonel Sacbajá was the medical director and he taught me the importance of reaching out with friendliness and warmth to every person who came for help. He said, "Speak Kaqchikel when you know that is more comfortable for people, and please let me know if ever people are waiting too long for help, especially if they are in pain." Dr. Sacbajá gave me a lot of confidence that I could use my skills to help people, and even the Executive Director, Don Marcelino noticed that I was learning a lot as a receptionist. He said, "I really like how you speak with people, how you answer the telephone, how you keep things moving." I knew that I was working with people who not only cared about giving good service to clients, but who also cared about me and my advancement. Once Dr. Sacbajá said to me, "Mirian, you have so much energy for your work. I hope that through the years, this never diminishes. I hope you never stop learning and growing. I hope you never sit back and accept life as it is, without working to improve it and yourself."

Don Marcelino asked me to temporarily fill in as a secretary in administration. There I learned so much more about the overall Behrhorst work, all the services, the board of directors, the general assembly, everything. Don Marcelino liked my work and made this my permanent position. That's when Marily Giron and I began to work together. One of the jobs that I found most challenging was coordinating the arrangements for the Training Center which groups rented for one day or more meetings. I had to work with many people, make many arrangements, solve problems, in short, be very organized so that things worked well for each group. I really enjoyed the challenge.

At that same time, I began working with Pat Krause who was the U.S. coordinator for Behrhorst. She needed someone to help organize a new Behrhorst project which promoted and sold Mayan artisan products in the U.S. Don Marcelino asked me to work with her. Believe it or not, this was the beginning of MayaWorks which now provides market for the artisan products of over 200 workers. But we didn't know that at the time. What we did know is that we had to design systems, as needed, for keeping track of product which artisan groups brought into the office, to pay them, to control the quality of their work, everything. There was a lot of creativity involved! Also, because of this new task, I was among the first to use a computer, even email. Soon, I became the computer person at Behrhorst, and this sometimes involved traveling to Guatemala City to Zone 10 for help with our computer. This was not my favorite activity! I did not like going into Guatemala City; I was afraid of what could happen there and indeed it did. The first time that I took the bus in, somebody tore my necklace off of me. After that, Don Marcelino had a Behrhorst driver take me to the computer office.

By 2000, the weaving project, legalized as MayaWorks since 1996, became too demanding to be a mere piece of my work in the Behrhorst administrative office. Together, Pat; Dr. Salazar, the new Behrhorst director, and I decided that I needed to work full time for MayaWorks. That's

how it's been since then, and Mayaworks has its own center here in a room that we rent from Behrhorst.

I myself have learned so much from my Behrhorst and Mayaworks "teachers." I keep growing and learning. Right now I'm in an intensive English course and I hope to succeed in passing the examination. I also intend to continue my university studies and earn my degree in business. I want never to be static and sit back and let life happen. Dr. Sacbajá gave me good encouragement to keep growing. My parents too taught me so much. They really gave me my first lessons in leadership, by expecting big things from me, by giving me responsibility. They helped me see my talents, as did my Behrhorst and MayaWorks friends. Without them, I cannot imagine believing in myself and the purposes for my life as I do. I am very committed to helping people have a better life, just as others have helped me.