

## Embracing A Culture One Smile at A Time

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Could you imagine an African American female FCS Agent leading a community-based program with only Spanish Speaking women to be successful? Also, the agent does not speak Spanish. New Bethel CDC Entre Amigas (Between Friends) program is offered in the East Biloxi community which has an increasing population of Hispanic/Latino families in South Mississippi. Since 2012, the Entre Amigas program has had 52 Hispanic/Latino women successfully complete a nine-month program on educational sessions regarding parenting, financial management, health, and nutrition. An oddly matched group as you can imagine, but this group has broken down so many walls and barriers with just the simplest gestures of a smile. For Latino women, high rates of poverty, poor education, limited job resources, language barriers, and fear of deportation increase their difficulty finding support services to assist in their efforts of improving their lives.

As Extension Agents, our shared goals need to be assessed in identifying, educating, and embracing the diversities within our communities. We need to identify, teach, and support these families in developing and achieving their educational, personal and financial goals. Where we lack in differences, we share goals of enriching the lives of everyone in our respected communities. None of these women are fluent English speakers; therefore, it makes the delivery of this program even more challenging, yet rewarding. However, the smiles on their faces after completion of our classes is always universal and clearly understood by everyone that “knowledge was gained, and change was made.”