

## Positive Impact Awards

Name: Felipe Pinzon

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State: Florida

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Select a category:

Financial Education and Empowerment: Those who provide the necessary tools to increase financial literacy within their communities

**Please describe in detail your nominee's specific accomplishment and what was involved in achieving it. Be sure to include the dates of the activities.**

According to the United Way of Florida's ALICE Report, nearly half of South Florida's residents do not earn enough income to cover their basic needs. When we look at communities of color – including Hispanics and Blacks – financial indicators pale in comparison to Whites. Compared to Whites, high school graduation rates are lower, levels of health insurance coverage are lower, rates of homeownership are lower, levels of unemployment for people of color are higher, poverty rates are higher and net worth is lower. All of these challenges make it increasingly difficult to achieve and maintain financial stability. Some may argue that it also makes it harder for one – particularly people of color – to achieve the America dream.

Felipe Pinzon is the Senior Vice President of Programs for Hispanic Unity of Florida (HUF). In this capacity, he oversees the agency's Center for Working Families (CWF) program. Rooted in research and best practices from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Center for Working Families program is designed to eliminate poverty by helping "low-income individuals and families get jobs, strengthen their finances and move up the economic ladder." In 2011, HUF introduced the CWF program to HUF's menu of programs and services – also overseen by Felipe- which focuses on civic engagement, youth education and development, and health.

Felipe has been a champion of this program by garnering financial support from grant making entities, recruiting partner organizations to provide supplementary services to clients, and constantly evaluating the program to strengthen its weaknesses and promoting successes.

**Please describe their impact, potential impact and how they have inspired others.**

Since 2011, 1,092 clients enrolled in CWF, impacting a total of 2,197 families. To date, CWF continues to deliver long-term coaching customized to each client's needs to help them overcome barriers and achieve economic success.

Active program participants have benefited from: increasing their savings, decreasing their debt and/or improving their credit scores (48%); purchasing a vehicle, home, starting a business or completing post-secondary education (19%); and receiving robust job readiness training paired with one-on-one workforce coaching.

Clients have shared testimonials such as the following:

"Hispanic Unity provided me with a home; it helped me when I arrived to Florida with SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly known as food stamps] benefits when I did not know where else to go. I now have been able to focus on my career, thanks to the Center for Working Families." – A.S.

"I am so grateful for the Customer Service classes received at Sheridan Technical College....beginning this year I am now a full time sales associate and I know that education and certifications will open more doors for me." – V.Q.

**Please describe the moment or situation that motivated your nominee to take action.**

Prior to 2011, the services offered to help clients in the financial areas of their lives was disjointed and operated in "silos", so to speak. Felipe's vision for improving the way we do business led the agency to adopt the CWF model to integrate and bundle the services that many of our clients value – accessing public benefits, job readiness, budgeting and establishing (or restoring) credit.

Since then, Felipe continues to seek or test ways we can improve our services. He's continuously seeking partnerships with community organizations who can add value to our clients, connecting with underserved communities, and taking calculated risks by piloting program expansion ideas before rolling them out.

**Please describe those characteristics that set your nominee apart from others**

Years ago, Felipe was a client of Hispanic Unity of Florida. HUF was established in 1982 and has since offered programs and services to help "immigrants and others to become self-sufficient, productive, and civically engaged." Felipe hails from Colombia and has worked with HUF since 2002, steadily developing his leadership skills and the skills of those around him. He is an incredibly humble

individual who is committed to the development of his team members and the improvement of our clients' lives. He has a special knack for research and where he can't find an existing best practice he will seek to create one.

**Please describe the impact that recognition will have on your nominee, their cause, and those they help.**

There are a number of awesome things happening in South Florida- and I truly believe the work of Felipe and his CWF team are among those awesome things. They are committed to guiding individuals through their respective journeys to achieving economic stability. And for most of our clients, this is not a short-term endeavor; the average amount of time a CWF client is in the program is two years. We are changing the lives of so many families. We are making a difference in the communities these families live in. To share the spotlight with other Positive Impact Award recipients would be an honor and a testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff who help make a meaningful impact in the lives of clients who see something more for themselves than struggling paycheck to paycheck...they see themselves achieving the American dream.

**If you would like to share any websites or online articles about your nominee's activities, please enter up to 3 links here.**

<http://www.hispanicunity.org/content/center-working-families-cwf>

<http://www.hispanicunity.org/content/huf-awarded-16-million-center-working-families-0>

<http://www.hispanicunity.org/content/fiordaliza-fernandez-urena>