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Continuing Ed

A Virtual Solution for the Real World

Miriam Vasquez was searching for something new. Over the years, she worked many jobs as an office assistant, but this type of employment no longer made sense for the wife and mother of three.

She needed to find a rewarding job that allowed her to work from home and set her sights on becoming a virtual office assistant, completing a series of Continuing Education online classes in January.

Before finishing the coursework, Vasquez established Ace Virtual Solutions online and began searching the virtual world for business. "I had my first client lined up a few days before my final class," she noted.

Landing a client took only a short time, thanks to a homework assignment that required her to build a list of business people that seemed to be in need of office assistance.

El Gallito Ingles Tire and Service Centers in Texas was on her list and became her first client, but not without some convincing. Not surprisingly, El Gallito owner Rogelio Contreras had never heard of a virtual office assistant.

Not a problem. Vasquez was prepared. Another homework assignment had called for creation of "a business website to help people understand the services I could offer," she explained.

After Contreras reviewed her website, he was still reluctant to hire Vasquez. Fortunately, another class assignment required creation of a client questionnaire to help determine how



Miriam Vasquez tackles work from home.

virtual assistant services could add value to their business. Now armed with specifics from Contreras, Vasquez was able to quickly assess El Gallito's business needs and propose customized services.

Vasquez, a graduate of the International Business College in Texas, had never taken an online class until enrolling at CE. "It was awesome because I could continue my daily routine and do assignments when I could make the time," she said.

Virtual Assistant classes are not widely offered in community college systems, but are increasing in popularity as the word spreads about the effectiveness and convenience of the program.

CE instructor Tom Smerk is one of the very first to teach a Virtual Assistant program in San Diego County. "Much of the success of this program was due to the fact that it was offered as an online course," said Smerk.

And, he continued, "people working in office support positions may be fearful of losing their job, so many look to self-employment as a way to protect themselves from loss of income," he said. "At the same time, employers can hire Virtual Assistants to do the work of office staff that they once had, but had to lay off. The time for a program like this has never been better." ♦

Prof. Roma Weaver on California Commission

Continuing Education Professor Roma Weaver has been appointed to the California Federation of Teacher's Commission on Adult Education. The commission monitors statutes and regulatory policies that govern adult education, and makes recommendations that impact enforcement of the policies. Roma is program and curriculum chair for Continuing Education's Parent Education and Child Development program. ♦