

# Woodland Stories

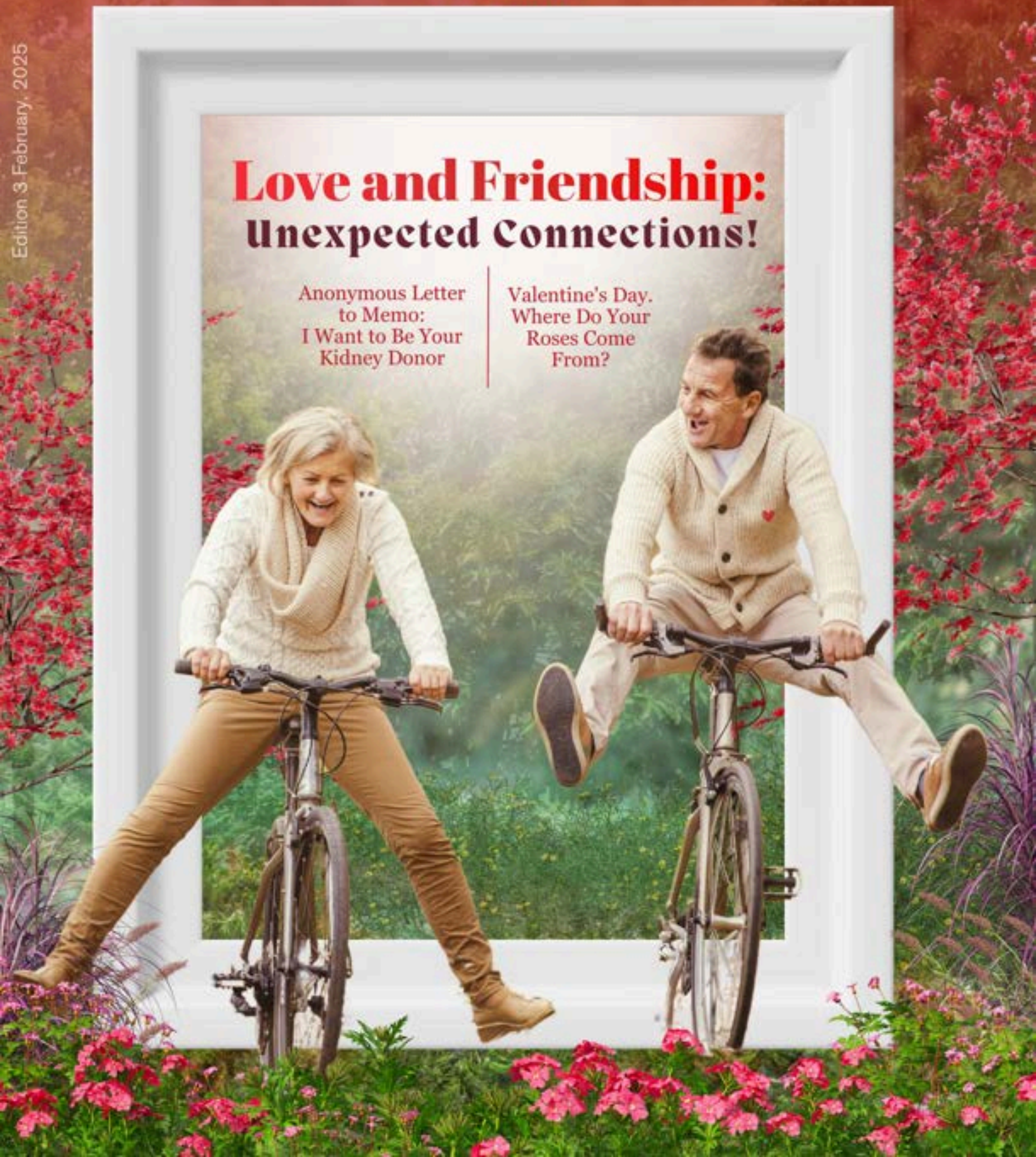
MAGAZINE

## Love and Friendship: Unexpected Connections!

Anonymous Letter  
to Memo:  
I Want to Be Your  
Kidney Donor

Valentine's Day.  
Where Do Your  
Roses Come  
From?

Edition 3 February, 2025





# Edition 3

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# *Editorial*

## Love is patient and kind

As we transition from winter to spring, a warm breeze of renewal sweeps into our lives. Beyond the natural changes surrounding us, it is important to highlight that the essence of being human is rooted in love—a pillar that supports both our personal and professional relationships.

For this reason, WoodlandS stories Magazine dedicates this edition to self-love, to stories that move us and invite reflection, to the love of work, love for family, support for our Hispanic community, and to the simple things that elevate us as human beings. We also emphasize International Women's Day, the importance of equality, respect, and collaboration between men and women.

This is the perfect time for business owners and families to celebrate our accomplishments, but also to open our hearts to new projects that will strengthen our community.

Spring Break is another pivotal moment, a time to rest, disconnect, and reconnect. It's an opportunity for families to spend time together, for friends to revive their bonds of friendship, regardless of origin. Let's celebrate life with gratitude.

Spring, with its colorful bloom, is a reminder that, whether the days are long or short, there is always room to grow, to give, and to receive affection. We only have today and now, so let's continue cultivating relationships that drive us toward collective success in our beloved community.

*Patricia Contreras*  
Founding Director  
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# Dr. Ricardo Flores

Leader in the Fight Against Childhood Cancer



# Dr. Ricardo Flores, MD

## Leader in the Fight Against Childhood Cancer

He works with a sense of humanity, music, and laughter to provide the best care for affected children.

WoodlanStories Magazine recently met with the distinguished oncologist Dr. Ricardo Flores, who leads the Hematology-Oncology department at Texas Children's Hospital in The Woodlands. He is the first Puerto Rican to hold such an important position at one of the world's most renowned hospitals.

At the hospital, he works with a human touch, music, and laughter to provide the best care to children affected by leukemia.

**In the United States, leukemia is the most common cancer among children and adolescents under 19. In Latin America and the Caribbean, nearly 30,000 cases of leukemia are diagnosed each year.**

### The Impact of Technology and Research in the Fight Against Childhood Cancer

"I came to the United States in 2007 after completing my training in Puerto Rico, and here in Texas, I found a fertile ground to continue my professional development in pediatric oncology and hematology." According to Dr. Flores, one reason childhood cancer is on the rise is due to advancements in technology and improvements in diagnostics. **Technology has enabled earlier and more accurate detection, which has led to the identification of more cases of cancer in children that were previously undiagnosed.**

Despite the rise in childhood cancer incidence, the mortality rate continues to decrease. Dr. Flores highlights that **currently, more than 80% of children diagnosed with cancer survive, though there is still much work to be done.**

### Most Common Types of Cancer in Children

Among the most common types of cancer in children, Dr. Flores mentions leukemia, brain tumors, and lymphomas. **Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and acute myeloid leukemia are the most common**, followed by brain tumors and lymphomas. While new, rarer types of cancer have emerged, medicine continues to advance in offering more effective and targeted treatments.



**‘Magic and music have a profound impact on the children and their families. I realized I wasn’t just helping the children, but also the parents and the medical staff,**

### **Innovation in Treatments: Immunotherapy and Personalized Medicine**

Immunotherapy is emerging as one of the most promising options for treating childhood cancer. **This treatment takes the child’s immune cells, modifies them, and returns them to the body to directly attack the cancer cells.** Thanks to these advancements, hospitals like Texas Children’s Hospital have become pioneers in implementing these new treatments.

### **The Emotional Impact of Childhood Cancer: Supporting Families**

Cancer not only affects the child but also their family. **Dr. Flores emphasizes the importance of providing emotional support to parents and siblings,** as the treatment process can be long and exhausting. Many parents lose their jobs to care for their children, which further exacerbates the emotional and financial strain on families. This is why the hospital offers a variety of resources, from animal therapy to family events, to help alleviate stress and foster a positive environment during treatment.

### **Music and Magic as Tools for Emotional Healing**

Dr. Flores is also known for his unique approach to interacting with children through **magic and music.** He learns magic tricks and plays the piano to connect with patients and alleviate their anxiety. **‘Magic and music have a profound impact on the children and their families.**

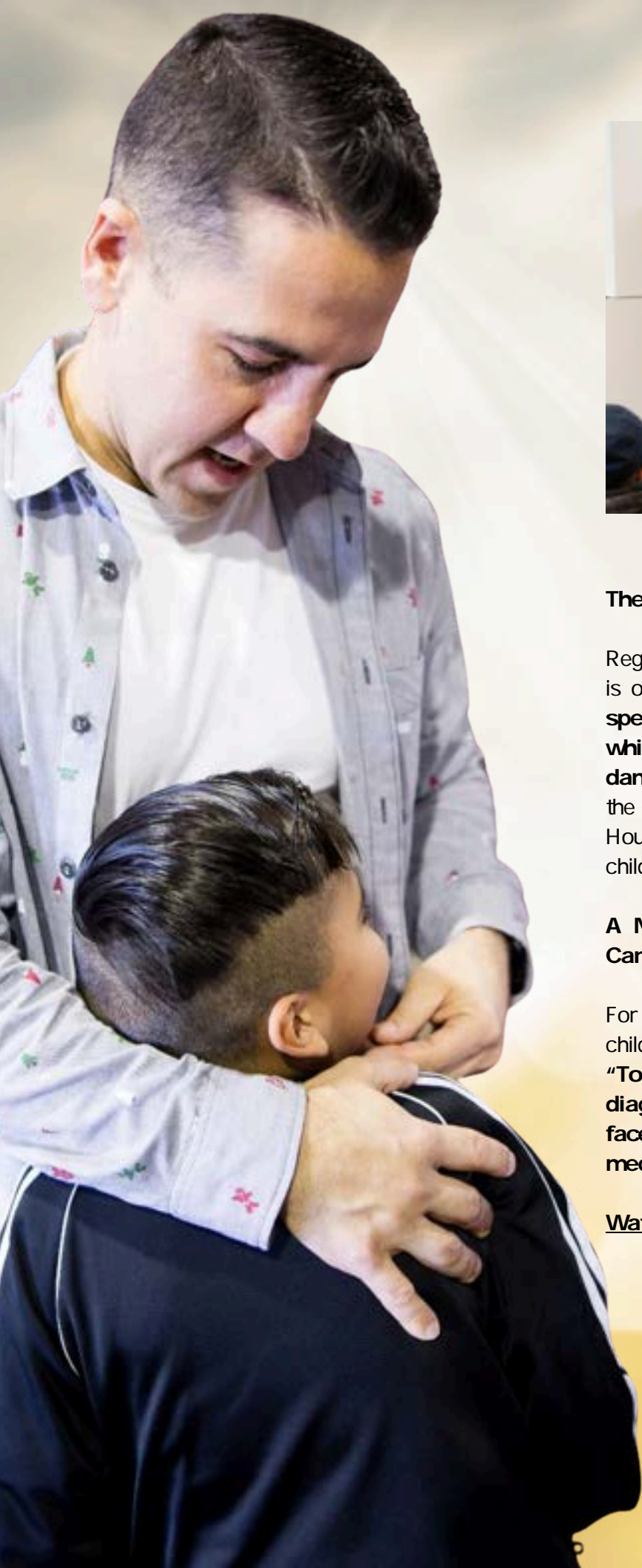
**I realized I wasn’t just helping the children, but also the parents and the medical staff,”**

### **Volunteering and Community Support: The Strength of the Hispanic Community**

One of Dr. Flores’s most notable characteristics is his dedication to volunteering and his collaboration with the community. **In 2017, Dr. Flores joined baseball player Carlos Correa to create a foundation that supports children with cancer.** The foundation has raised more than \$6 million in supplies and medications and organizes events that allow children to enjoy unique experiences, such as attending baseball games. The Hispanic community in Houston plays a crucial role in this support, coming together for fundraising events and offering their time and resources.







### **The Future of Childhood Cancer Treatment**

Regarding the future of cancer treatment, Dr. Flores is optimistic. **“We are advancing toward more specific treatments, such as immunotherapy, which directly target cancer without damaging other cells in the body.”** Additionally, the advancements in technology and research in Houston are positioning the city as a leader in childhood cancer treatment and cure.

### **A Message for Parents Facing a Childhood Cancer Diagnosis**

For parents who receive a cancer diagnosis for their children, Dr. Flores sends a message of hope: **“Today, the vast majority of children diagnosed with cancer survive, and we must face this battle together, knowing that medicine is making giant strides.”**

**[Watch the full interview here](#)**

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# VALENTINE'S DAY

*Where Do Your Roses Come From?*

Globally, the **floral market** is expected to reach a value of nearly **\$55 billion**, with peak consumption dates such as Valentine's Day representing a significant portion of that revenue. While some countries are large consumers (the U.S., the Netherlands, the United Kingdom), most of the flowers for this occasion are produced in exporting countries like **Colombia, Ecuador, and Kenya**. Valentine's Day consumption in the U.S. is expected to continue increasing, with the total flower market potentially surpassing **\$21 billion** by 2025. The most in-demand flowers will remain **red roses**, followed by **lilies and orchids**.



## COLOMBIA

Flower production, particularly roses, is expected to reach \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion in exports.



## ECUADOR

Exports may exceed \$1.2 billion, primarily in red roses.



## KENYA

Exports, especially to Europe, are expected to reach around \$1.1 billion by 2025, focusing on roses and lilies.



## MÉXICO

As both a producer and exporter, Mexico is projected to generate approximately \$1.8 billion in floral production, especially of roses, carnations, and gerberas

# On the Occasion of International Women's Day

## *Women's Day*

### Women Who Have the "WOW" Factor

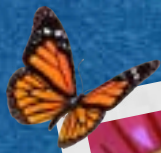
Each of these women has made groundbreaking contributions in their fields, changing the course of science, literature, and medicine in remarkable ways. They are extraordinary women with the "WOW!" factor.



South Korean writer **Han Kang** received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2024. She was the first Asian woman and the first Korean to receive this honor. The Swedish Academy selected her for her "intense poetic prose that addresses historical trauma and exposes the fragility of human life."



**Claudia Goldin**  
Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences 2023  
Reason: Recognized for her pioneering work on the gender wage gap and the underrepresentation of women in the workforce.



**Carolyn R. Bertozzi**  
 Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2022  
 Reason: Awarded for her development of bioorthogonal chemistry, a breakthrough that enabled the creation of new tools to study molecular interactions within cells and advance medical treatments, such as cancer research.



**Louise Glück**  
 Nobel Prize in Literature 2020  
 Reason: Awarded for her unmistakable poetic voice, which, with an economy of language and austere beauty, explores human existence and personal emotions, focusing on nature, pain, and isolation.



**Andrea M. Ghez**  
 Nobel Prize in Physics 2020  
 Reason: Awarded for her research on black holes. She contributed to the discovery of a supermassive black hole at the center of our galaxy, the Milky Way, using innovative methods in astrophysics.



**Frances Arnold**  
 Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2018  
 Reason: Awarded for her work in the directed evolution of enzymes. This technique has allowed the creation of enzymes for more efficient processes in the pharmaceutical, energy, and biotechnology industries.



**Jennifer A. Doudna**  
 Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2020  
 Reason: Recognized for her pioneering work in the development of CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing technology, a tool that has revolutionized molecular biology and opened new possibilities for medical research and gene therapy.

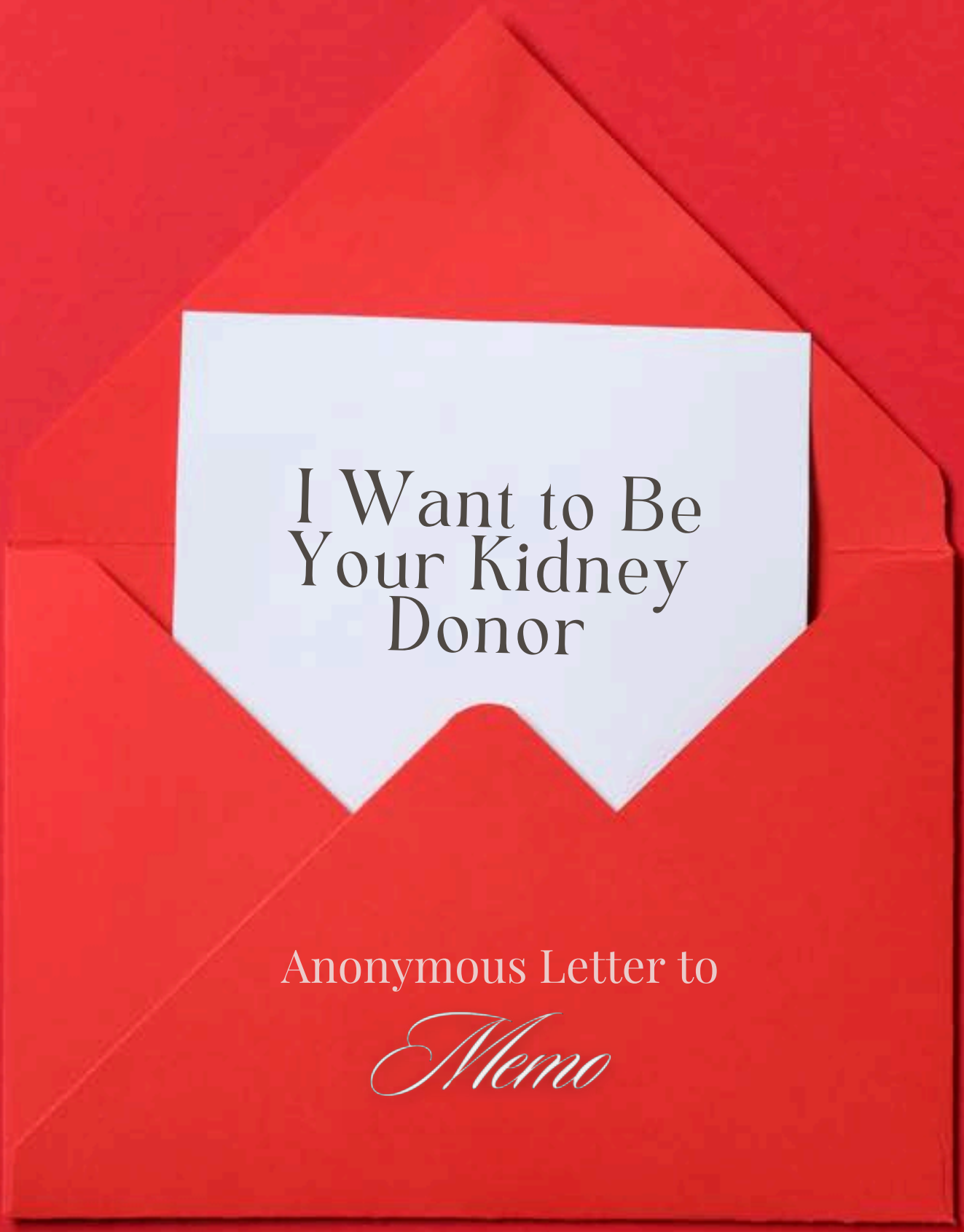


**Carolyn W. Greider**  
 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2009  
 Reason: Awarded for her discovery of telomeres and telomerase, an enzyme crucial for protecting chromosomes during cell division, which has had significant implications in cellular biology and aging.



**Toni Morrison**  
 Nobel Prize in Literature 2019  
 Reason: Morrison was awarded for her poetic force and visionary depth, which explored the Black experience in the United States through powerful narratives, as reflected in her novel *Beloved*, which addresses the history of slavery and its lasting effects.





I Want to Be  
Your Kidney  
Donor

Anonymous Letter to

*Memo*



# Carta anónima para Memo: Quiero ser tu donante de riñón

Por Patricia Contreras



WoodlandStories Magazine presents this inspiring story, full of courage, faith, and hope. **Juan Guillermo Hurtado** (Memo) and his wife, **María Isabel Quintero**, have endured a very challenging journey, but today, they share with us a life-affirming and inspiring message.

**"My story is not just mine; it's the story of my entire family,"** explains Memo, referring to the obstacles he has faced throughout his life, such as dialysis, **heart attacks, and cancer**. But his testimony is even more remarkable because behind it all lies his fight for a kidney transplant. In the United States, more than **90,000 people are waiting for a kidney donation**, with only about **5,000 to 6,000 transplants** performed annually. But what makes Memo's story truly striking is the turn his life took when **a brave stranger decided to donate a kidney** to save his life.

## The Unexpected Gift of a Brave American

**"I had to be on dialysis for three years without kidneys. I couldn't urinate, eat, or sleep properly. And all of that, without knowing if I would ever find a donor,"** Memo shares. It was in a moment of despair that the father of a classmate from his daughters' school found out about his situation and decided to perform an incredible act of kindness: to **donate a kidney**, even though they had never met, demonstrating **that true acts of love and generosity have no boundaries**.

**“ My story is not just mine, it is the story of my entire family. ”**



"This American man didn't know me, and yet he decided to give me his kidney. He told me it was an easy decision because he wanted to make a difference in someone's life. His family supported him, and his love for his daughter was so great that they didn't hesitate to save another family,"

This story not only speaks of a generous donor but also highlights the importance of **awareness about organ donation**. **"Many don't know that they can donate while alive, like a kidney or a liver. It's essential that people inform themselves and realize that with a simple act, they can save lives,"** says María Isabel.

### God Has Given Me Peace

Despite the challenges, Memo continues his fight. During the transplant process, his body had to adapt to the new kidney, receiving immunosuppressive medication to prevent rejection. **"It's a difficult process, but nothing compared to what I went through during dialysis. Rejection is a possibility, and my body needs time to accept the organ. Every day is a battle, but I'm no longer alone."**

**"God has given me this peace,"** Memo says with a serene gaze. He and his family have gone through moments of uncertainty and pain, but also moments of **reconciliation and hope**. **"My wife has been my rock, my daughters have learned to value life and never give up, and now we are closer than ever."**

Memo and María Isabel's journey is a testament to **faith, perseverance, and the power of human solidarity**. They are committed to sharing their story to inspire others to never give up, to never lose hope, and to **always give their best**.



### **Life is More Than Money**

**"Love, serving, and giving are what truly fill us. We realize that when you help others, everything else makes sense. Life is more than materialism; it's a path of selflessness and sacrifice."**

Today, Memo and María Isabel invite us to reflect on the importance of valuing what truly matters. Life, health, and love for others are the greatest gifts we have.

Don't forget to follow us on our social media for more stories like this one, because if **Memo could, you can too.**

\*Journalist with over 25 years of experience in various media outlets, holding a postgraduate degree as a Specialist in Public Opinion and a Master's in Political Science with an emphasis on Public Policy. She is also the founding director of WoodlandStories Magazine.

**[Watch the full interview here](#)**





# Heart and Finances in Harmony:

## How to Celebrate a Debt-Free Valentine's Day



By  
**Manuel Rodríguez**  
Personal Finance Coach

*Tener una relación saludable con el dinero empieza con pasos simples.*

*hacer un presupuesto, evitar gastos impulsivos y ahorrar para el futuro."*



Valentine's Day is a perfect occasion to celebrate the people we love. But it can also be a great time to reflect on something that affects our lives more than we think: our relationship with money.

Money, like love, has a huge impact on our decisions and relationships. However, its effect depends on how we manage it. Using it in a balanced way not only helps us avoid stress but also creates a healthier environment for us and those around us.

One of the biggest problems we face is falling into unnecessary debt. Debt can become an emotional and financial burden that limits our options and, in some cases, affects our personal relationships. According to LendingTree.com, Texas ranks 12th among the states where credit card holders, in the last quarter of 2024, had an average debt of \$8,316, with Connecticut leading at \$9,323.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, **in the third quarter of 2024, U.S. credit card debt reached \$1.166 trillion.** In a Federal Reserve study conducted in May 2024, 47% of Americans carried a credit card balance for at least one month.

That's why it's important to learn to live within our means and focus on our priorities. On a day like this, let's not contribute to these statistics. Remember that the most valuable gifts don't have to be expensive. Sometimes, a sincere gesture, a moment of quality time, or heartfelt words are much more meaningful than any costly gift.

Building a healthy relationship with money begins with simple steps: **creating a budget, avoiding impulse spending, and saving for the future.** Additionally, sharing with others, whether through generous gestures or supporting important causes, can make a big difference in our perspective.

It's also important **not to let money define our value or the value of our relationships.** When we see it as a tool rather than a goal, we can focus on what really matters: our connections, our values, and our well-being.

This Valentine's Day, let's celebrate not only the love we share with others but also a more mindful approach to our relationship with money. **In the end, what we do with wisdom and care is what lasts and leaves a lasting impact.**

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A man with glasses and a beard, wearing a blue and black plaid jacket, stands outdoors. He is looking off to the side with a thoughtful expression. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with trees and a building.

# Survival, Faith, and Music: The Story of Rafael Rubiano

**"You have one year to live."** These words forever changed the life of **Rafael Rubiano**. A young man, full of dreams, who never imagined that at 38 years old he would have to face a **stage 4 brain cancer**. What seemed like an arm pain turned into the nightmare that would lead him to an **emergency surgery**, where doctors gave him little chance of surviving. Despite this, Rafael's story is far from a tragedy; it is a **testimony of faith, strength, and overcoming adversity**.

**Stage 4 brain cancer**, also known as **glioblastoma multiforme** (GBM), is one of the most aggressive types of brain cancer. This type of tumor originates in the glial cells (the brain's supporting cells) and is characterized by rapid growth and its tendency to extensively invade other areas of the brain. It is very difficult to treat due to its aggressiveness and the way it spreads, making it a cancer with a **very poor prognosis**.

## **"My Wife Was Brave"**

Rafael began to feel strange symptoms while playing the piano, **his greatest passion**. **"I felt a cramp in my left arm, but I didn't pay attention to it,"** he recalls. However, the situation quickly worsened. **"I forgot about my arm, I couldn't speak... My wife helped me put on my pajamas and rushed me to the hospital."** After several tests, doctors discovered a brain hemorrhage, and immediately, surgery was scheduled. **"They told me there was no hope."**

At that moment, Rafael faced what many fear: death. But he did not give up. His family, especially his wife, became his rock. **"My wife was brave, she took care of me, helped me bathe, dress, and even cared for me while I was completely immobilized."** In the midst of this painful process, with a baby just 5 months old, **Rafael asked God for the opportunity to stay alive:** "I won't see my little son grow...," he lamented.

After **30 sessions of radiotherapy**, which left his body weak, Rafael suffered a pulmonary infarction. Although doctors thought his cancer had metastasized, they soon realized that the issue was something else. However, **recovery was arduous.** He was told he would never walk again, that his life would never be the same. **But Rafael's faith and dedication to his family kept him fighting.**



### Declared a Cancer Survivor

Despite being declared a **"terminal case"** by doctors, Rafael watched as, little by little, his body began to heal. **Five years later, he was declared**

**a cancer survivor.** The doctors couldn't believe it, but he had a clear explanation: **"God healed me, and my life is a miracle."**

Today, Rafael continues moving forward, not only with music but also with a deep desire to share his testimony. **"Every day is a miracle. I thank God for every breath,"** he says. His family, his three children, and his wife remain his greatest strength. **"If I hadn't had a solid relationship with my wife, it wouldn't have been possible to survive this."**

Rafael has turned his pain into **inspiration.** Not only does he teach music, but he also gives **lessons in piano, guitar, drums, and other instruments** to people of all ages, from young children to the elderly. His passion for music knows no bounds, and he continues to be a testament to how, with faith, anything is possible.

**"With God, everything is possible,"** Rafael repeats, as he continues to play his instruments and share his story. His life is a clear reminder that, even when everything seems lost, **faith, love, and determination can change one's destiny.**

**If you'd like to learn more about Rafael's incredible story and how he has overcome everything in his life, or if you'd like to support his passion for music, you can contact him at 786-695-7241.**

\*In Latin America, the incidence of glioblastoma is approximately 3 to 5 cases per 100,000 people per year. This can vary slightly across different countries and regions. International studies estimate that, in general, glioblastoma represents approximately 50-60% of primary malignant brain tumors in adults.

[See the full story by clicking here](#)



# Human traffic Aymés Cervantes:

## *A Story of Resilience and Hope in the Face of Human Trafficking in Houston*

Texas has been identified as one of the states with the highest rates of human trafficking in the United States, according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Houston stands out as a hub for human trafficking due to its geographical location, proximity to the Mexican border, and its importance as a key port for trade and transportation. **The Texas Department of Justice has documented over 2,000 cases of sex trafficking victims in the city in recent years, and the numbers continue to rise.** Despite these alarming statistics, human trafficking remains a crime that is difficult to accurately measure, as many cases are never reported.

Aymés Cervantes, a young Mexican woman, has been a victim of human trafficking in Houston. **WoodlandStories Magazine spoke with her.** Her story, heartbreaking and filled with pain, is also a testimony of resilience and overcoming adversity. After living through a traumatic experience for more than four months, she has now become a key voice to alert others about the reality of this crime.

**"I never suspected anything. I thought I was taking a normal job, but I was wrong,"** she tells us, recalling how a simple job offer turned into her nightmare. Aymés, like many others, fell victim to a trafficking network by trusting an apparently legitimate job offer.



**"What human trafficking networks do is study your life, your vulnerabilities, and take advantage of them,"** she says with a serious look, remembering how her financial need led her to accept a job that, unknowingly, would trap her in both psychological and physical captivity.

**"I saw the ad, went to the interview, they told me I would be taking care of children, and I never suspected anything unusual. It wasn't until they took me to a different house than the one, they had told me that I started to realize something was wrong,"** she narrates, recalling the moment when she realized that something was amiss. At that point, Aymés lost all autonomy, and her life became a living hell.

**"It's like being in a prison, but not a physical one; it's an emotional prison. You can no longer think for yourself, nor decide about your life or your body,"** she explains, her voice breaking as she recalls the darkest moments of her captivity.

During her time under the oppression of her captors, Aymés was subjected to indescribable situations. **"They forced me to attend to up to 10 clients a day. If you got sick, they wouldn't let you rest; you couldn't do anything against their will."** Amid all this, she was threatened with death, and her family, thousands of miles away, was used as a tool of pressure.

**"One of the ways they control you is through threats. They say, 'We know where your family is, we know you have children,' and that makes you feel completely vulnerable. You no longer have control over anything,"** she shares, as she relieves the intense psychological threats she was subjected to.

The situation worsened when Aymés discovered she was pregnant. **"They told me I had to abort, but also that I had to keep working. Not only did they make me feel like an object, but they also denied me any rights over my body."** This new emotional reality was a devastating blow for her, already struggling with her captivity. However, amidst so much suffering,

**"They forced me to attend to up to 10 clients a day. If you got sick, they wouldn't let you rest; you couldn't do anything against their will."**



**"that baby, whom I named Gabriel, was the angel who gave me the strength to move forward and escape."**

Aymés never gave up. **"My mind always told me I had to escape, even though I didn't know how or when, but one day I would make it,"** she recalls, her face reflecting the determination with which she fought to regain her freedom.

The escape happened at the most unexpected moment. After receiving medical attention, she was given the opportunity to return to her "home," but **"that was my chance. During the transfer, I asked for help from a volunteer and managed to escape, leaving the terror behind."**



**“There is something bigger than all of this: faith. Faith in God and in ourselves. Faith gives us the strength to move forward, no matter how difficult the road may be.”**

**“This testimony is not just for women, but also for men and families. No one is exempt from being a victim of human trafficking. What happened to me can happen to anyone, no matter your social level or education,”** she assures, issuing an urgent warning to everyone who thinks this reality only happens to others.

**“If we don’t pay attention to the signs, if we don’t educate our children and ourselves about the dangers that exist, we’re leaving the door open for trafficking networks,”** she adds.

Aymés also calls out to those who consume pornography or sexual services. **“Every time you pay for these services, you may be indirectly contributing to human trafficking. Not everything that seems like a legitimate business is.”**

**“The healing process has been long. I’ve had to learn to forgive myself and redefine my life. My daughter gave me the strength to do so. Today I can say that I am a survivor, not a victim,”** she concludes, showing herself firm and optimistic about her future.

**“There is something bigger than all of this: faith. Faith in God and in ourselves. Faith gives us the strength to move forward, no matter how difficult the road may be.”**

**“The message is clear: we can all overcome any difficult situation. But we must be alert because we are all vulnerable. If there’s one thing I’ve learned, it’s that human trafficking is real, it’s happening, and it’s closer than we imagine,”** she ends with determination.

Aymés Cervantes’ testimony is an urgent call to reflect on the reality of human trafficking, to educate our families, and to stay vigilant against this devastating crime.

[See the full story by clicking her](#)



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# Armando Anguiano: The Vision to Plant 100 Churches

In the northern part of The Woodlands, Texas, a faith community is witnessing an inspiring story. Pastor Armando, together with his wife Sara, has embarked on an ambitious project to plant 100 Hispanic churches in the coming years. This vision comes from a generous heart, guided by the belief that the Gospel can bring purpose and transformation to the lives of many people.

"How about 100 churches?" Armando asks. The answer is clear: in a region where 40% of the population is Hispanic, the spiritual challenge is greater than many imagine. With the growth of the Hispanic community, it is expected that by 2030, up to 90% of the population will speak Spanish. This scenario has driven the church to act with urgency and seek the spiritual well-being of a community that, for the most part, faces challenges in adaptation and acceptance.



## **The Impact of the Hispanic Community**

Armando is 55 years old and, together with his family, has made the United States his home for the past 12 years. Before coming to Texas, he had apparent success in Mexico, but he felt the need for a space to reconnect with his family and seek spiritual direction. "The primary idea was to come to this wonderful place so that my children could improve their language skills and so that I could pray and seek God," he shares.

The call to be a pastor is something beyond a personal choice. According to Armando, "The work of a pastor has more to do with the gifts and purpose for which you were created than with something you choose out of preference." This calling becomes even more relevant in a context like the United States, where the growth of the Hispanic community is undeniable. The contribution of Latinos is key not only for the economy but also for the social and spiritual development of this nation.

## **Spiritual Challenges and the Importance of Spirit Care**

One of the major challenges the church faces today is the disenchantment some feel toward the spiritual realm, especially in such a fast-paced and materialistic world. Technology, social media, and the constant pursuit of the physical and external have led many to neglect what truly matters: the care of the spirit.

"The world has changed a lot. We focus on the exterior, on the body, and on emotions, but we forget that we are also a spirit," reflects Armando. "Just as we exercise to care for our bodies, we must also be intentional about caring for our spirit. My challenge for you is: what are you doing today to care for your spirit?"

Comparing spiritual life to physical training, Armando makes a powerful analogy. "When you go to a gym, you can be disciplined, but if you don't follow the instructions of an experienced coach,



your efforts won't be as effective. The same happens with spiritual life. We need the guidance of someone who knows the way."

### **The Legacy of Rick Warren and the Humility of a Leader**

Throughout his journey, Armando has had the opportunity to work with international figures like Rick Warren, a Christian leader known worldwide. For him, the most impactful aspect of Warren is his humility. "It's impressive to see how someone with so much influence continues to demonstrate a humble heart full of love for others," says Armando.

### **The Reality of Being a Pastor: A Calling with a High Price**

Being a pastor is not easy, especially when people expect you to have all the answers. "Pastors are human, we have challenges, we suffer, and we go through times of pain and depression," says Armando. A pastor's daily life can be emotionally exhausting, as preaching a message is like running a half marathon in terms of energy. However, the key to enduring these challenges is maintaining a genuine relationship with God.

"What really makes the difference is knowing God in a real way. When you do, no matter what you face, there is always hope," Armando concludes.

### **A Message for Hispanics: Contributing to the Future of a Nation**

For Hispanics coming to the United States, Armando has a clear message: "This country has been a fertile ground for many, and it's exciting to see how the Hispanic community is contributing with effort and dedication. Here, it's not about seeing ourselves as inferior or superior, but recognizing that we all have the same opportunities and the same potential."

### **The Call to Not Live in Mediocrity**

With 50 years of life experience and reflection, Armando closes the interview by sharing something that deeply angers him: "Mediocrity. I can't stand seeing people limit themselves, how they believe they can't achieve more, how they settle for living a life that doesn't reflect their true potential."

This message of hope, challenge, and action is what drives Armando and his church to continue pursuing their vision of planting 100 Hispanic churches. It is a project that aims not to elevate names but to transform lives and bless the community with the purposeful message the Gospel brings.

**See the full interview by clicking here**

# Self-Love and Identity: The Key to Your Career



By Karina Eisner, Career Coach and Executive Leadership Consultant

## Not What, but Who

From the top executive down, we all reach a point where we need to make a change in our career path. And the pressure begins: resume, LinkedIn profile, contacts, calls, meetings. But before you jump into that race, don't forget the most important thing: yourself.

My clients often confirm that they only manage to regain confidence and overcome the stress of this stage when they stop to make a deep self-assessment of their mission and objectives.

Let's explore why knowing and embracing yourself is the secret to success.

## What Is Identity and Why Does it Matter?

Identity is not what we do, but who we are; it is what defines and motivates us as people. Reflecting on ourselves and accepting who we have become are key in making good decisions about our next career move, and achieving our highest goals.





**The alternative is accepting the first thing that comes our way, and ending up dissatisfied and burnt out.  
Knowing yourself is power!**

### **Identity, purpose and work**

While identity is the “who,” purpose is the “why,” the compass that decides our general direction in life.

Those with clear purpose are more productive and happier overall, and more likely to retain jobs longterm, according to statistics.

It is clear, then, that finding purpose is a good strategy, and increases self-esteem. Knowing ourselves well is key towards the future job, since it guarantees:

- **Clear vision:** Knowing who we are and what we want helps us to focus on what is important, without fears or doubt.
- **Effective resume and interviews:** Knowing our value, skills, and goals makes us more attractive to employers.
- **Strong confidence:** Self-esteem helps us pursue higher goals, demand what we deserve, and set clear boundaries.

As we see, knowing and accepting ourselves, and establishing clear objectives, increase self-esteem—and our chances of success.

The clarity, authenticity and self-confidence gained in the process ensure the best professional step, one that allows us to make an impact aligned to our purpose.

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### **Looking for Professional Success? It starts with you!**

Bottom line: in professional development and job seeking, a personal inventory is a smart decision. Furthermore, it is an essential act of self-love that will open up new opportunities to grow and make a difference. In doing so, you'll not only find a job—you'll love the job you find.

**If this resonates with you, whether as an employee, leader or entrepreneur, count on me to guide you in this discovery process. Your best career move is waiting, and it starts with you.**

**AUTHOR:**

Karina Eisner, Career Coach and Executive Leadership Consultant - English, Spanish & Italian

Karina offers career and executive leadership coaching in person and remotely, focusing on effective strategies for job search, professional development, and business leadership.  
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# XALISKO

MEXICANA



Xalisko refers to the state of Jalisco, the homeland of Chef Beatriz.

From the heart of Jalisco, Chef Beatriz uses only the freshest local ingredients to create authentic Mexican dishes that resonate with the richness of her cultural heritage. Taste the passion and precision in every bite, from our signature slow-cooked Trompito to the zesty and refreshing ceviche, each recipe perfected over years of culinary dedication.



**XALISKO**  
COCINA MEXICANA



# THE RECIPE

## Pumpkin and Carrot Soup



Hello, I'm Sorry, mom to two wonderful children, 8 and 10 years old, who teach me every day what it truly means to be strong and achieve goals. I've always loved cooking, seeing it as a special way to show love. But it wasn't until I had my children that I discovered cooking is so much more than that.

The recipe you'll find below is meant to be enjoyed while preparing it with your family, whether with your kids, your spouse, or, even better, all together. My hope is that, in doing so, you'll create unforgettable memories.

**Everything is allowed, even ordering takeout after a failed attempt! What truly matters is the time you spend together**

# Pumpkin and Carrot Soup

**With just a few ingredients, this soup becomes a comforting and loving dish, perfect for sharing with those you love most.**

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1/2 kilo of pumpkin
- 1 onion
- 1/4 kilo of carrots
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 liter of broth (any kind you prefer)
- 1/2 cup of heavy cream
- 1/4 teaspoon of freshly ground black pepper
- Fresh cilantro to taste

## PREPARATION:

1. Peel and cut the pumpkin into cubes. Dice the onion and carrots.
2. In a pot, heat a little olive oil over low heat and add the onion. Cook until it becomes translucent, about 5 minutes.
3. Add the carrots and cook for an additional 15 minutes.
4. Add the pumpkin, bay leaf, and broth (adjust the amount to your taste).
5. Cook over medium heat, partially covering the pot, for about 30 minutes, until the vegetables are tender.
6. Blend the mixture with fresh cilantro to taste.
7. Return the soup to the heat for about 5 minutes, adding the heavy cream to fully incorporate it.
8. Season with freshly ground black pepper and adjust the salt as needed.

**And there you have it! Serve this delicious soup with all the love it deserves. Enjoy!**





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Our mission is to be a **vehicle of inspiration and connection within the Hispanic community**, highlighting stories that promote inclusion and mutual understanding.

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