



## **Mentoring Matters: Big Sister Becomes Ultimate Role Model For Teen Who Lost Mom**

*By Rudabeh Shahbazi  
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MIAMI— It's clear Florangel Lopez feels at home at Marlins Stadium, as she saunters through the halls.

"My favorite part is being a ticket taker because I get to interact with guests more," said Lopez. "I see their smiles."

The 18 year old works in the guest services department for the team.

"I learned really quickly, actually," she said. "It's a big stadium, and it's really hard to learn."

Lopez, who is still a full-time high school student, has come a long way in the year since she met her mentor, Tere Garcia, who is the administrative assistant to a vice president of the team.

“When I first met Florangel, she was somewhat shy, not as talkative as she has become – which is great,” said Garcia. “Now, we can really relate, and we have developed a great relationship. She sort of seemed to need a bit of guidance, which is what I was looking for.”

Lopez shadowed Garcia at work, when Garcia decided to volunteer with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. The two bonded immediately, and as their relationship grew, Garcia recommended Lopez come to the Marlins job fair. Now, the two are colleagues.

“I feel she has grown up in just a few months,” said Garcia. “I see her so grown up, and she’s done her job very well– I do consult with her manager. She likes it here, she loves it. She really likes to make a difference with everybody else.”

Garcia has worked with Lopez, helping her manage her work and homework, guiding her through the tough times that come with being a teenager and serving as a role model for a girl who lost her own mother when she was just a child.

“It was kind of tough, because I was young, I was 11,” said Lopez, who said she grew up a tomboy in a household full of boys and her father. “I didn’t know about girls, I wouldn’t want to fix my hair and do all that.”

Garcia said she has seen Lopez turn her life around and get on the right track, and that she values their relationship.

“You can make a friend for life, someone that can count on you at any time, someone that you truly feel that you can depend, and that depends on you, someone you feel you can always have an open ear for them,” she said. “I think that’s just really rewarding as a human being.”

Lopez said if it wasn’t for Garcia, she would still be struggling at home and in school without regard for her future.

“I like when someone pressures me, because that means that person cares about you a lot,” said Lopez. “When that person just pushes you and pushes you and pushes you, I like that.”

Lopez has big plans. She wants to graduate high school, study international in college and work her way up to an executive position someday.

Garcia has always believed in Lopez, and even though her mentee – and now her Marlins family member – is now an adult herself, the two ladies plan to stay in each other’s lives for a long time to come.

“I am someone that always keeps in touch with friends, I’m known for that,” said Garcia. “I have had friends since I was in middle school, and I still keep in touch with them, so I’m someone that she cannot get rid of too easy.”