

The Journey of the Union County, County Manager

By Autumn Snowden

The Journey for Cynthia Coto to become Union County manager was a very unique one. In fact, being a young mom, she started off in Human Resources in Florida. Through a series of promotions, she worked her way higher and higher, until she was an acting director. However, when after attaining that role, the next opportunity for a promotion was almost lost, because she had not yet received a college degree. So Cynthia Coto made a deal with the person hiring for this new position. The deal was, if she could have the position, she would finish her degree in 18 months. In under time she received a liberal arts degree, since she had credits from earlier college; that was the degree she could get the fastest. Eventually her and her family moved to North Carolina, where again she worked her way up to higher positions, and eventually county manager.

Mrs. Coto wouldn't recommend anyone taking the path she did to become where she is today because it's a hard path to take. For anyone wanting to get into a position like hers she would recommend earning a masters degree, and also to stay very involved in the county. Also, she stated, that you should have internships and be informed, about your county, your officials, your state, etc.

Although there is no normal day, as a county manger, and every day is different, there are tasks that are done regularly. For instance, there are meetings that she would attend and know of in advance, like the interview I had with her. Furthermore, she meets with her commissioners once a week. This becomes more difficult, when you add the fact that not more than 2 commissioners can be in the room at the same time, unless it is an official meeting. With all of her duties, fixed and fluid, she tends to work 55-60 hours a week.

Along with the long hours, there are other hardships that come with being a county manger. For one, in that position you live in a glass house, everyone knows everything about you. Another is the fact that in hard times, it is the county manager who must initiate cutbacks. This is the hardest part for Mrs. Coto. Also, since her elected officials make the all the decisions, and she the voice of the elected officials she must carry out their decisions, whether she agrees or not.

Though there are these hardships, there are good things that make her job worth it. Her favorite part of her career is, the sense of fulfillment she gets from making a difference. The differences have kept Ms. Coto in county government positions for 41 years with 12 years as a county manager. Making a difference everyday and for the future is what keeps her fulfilled in her career.