

# **El Paso store offers needy women on-the-job training\_72505**

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## **El Paso store offers needy women on-the-job training**

**By Jocelyn Delgado**

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EL PASO-A new grocery store opened in El Paso, but it's not in business to make money. Its goal is to provide job training for women seeking to turn their lives around.

The Christian Women's Job Corps of El Paso opened Mi Tiendita Favorita-My Favorite Little Store-to give graduates of its program a practical means to continue their training.

It's the first such store of its kind in the nation operated by Christian Women's Job Corps, a ministry of Woman's Missionary Union. Texas Baptists help support the program through gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions.

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**Mary  
Hill  
Davis  
Offering  
for  
Texas  
Missions**

The store aims to offer products as a full grocery store would. Customers can find a variety of produce, grocery and household goods at lower prices.

Since it's a nonprofit organization, profits go toward maintaining the store.

Last February, Coordinator Paula Jeser brainstormed with Randy Rankin, president of Lee and Beulah Moor Children's Home, to find a way to make sure her graduates got jobs. Although the school offered job training, students rarely continued their education to receive a high school diploma equivalency certificate. In the past year, Jeser only knew of two graduates who had earned a diploma.

For 13 weeks, Jeser tried offering classes to prepare for high school diploma equivalency exams, but students couldn't get beyond the first stage, she said. On average, women come to the program with a third grade education, she said.

Companies wouldn't hire students without a diploma, so Jeser and Rankin found a loophole. Working at the grocery store, women would receive on-the-job training required for employment.

Four months ago, the El Paso Empowerment Zone gave the children's home \$150,000. The children's home in turn donated the money to build the 1,200-square-foot store and stock its shelves.

Local retail stores agreed to hire students after they have worked 20 hours

a week for a year. One local real estate manager's association approached Jeser with a plan to offer free apartment management training so woman had more options.

During the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the store, Jeser gave graduates butterfly pins to signify their transformation.

The women came in as an egg on a leaf, as they hatched into caterpillars they began to learn, and finally transformed into butterflies, she said.

“Now they're going to spread their wings, and we're going to watch them fly,” she said.

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