



Retail Business Services

National Hispanic Heritage Month: Sofia Bullock Shares Heritage of Hospitality

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For Sofia Bullock, Administrative Assistant with Retail Business Services, the services company of Ahold Delhaize USA, celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month means celebrating warmth and family.

"I am from San Miguel, El Salvador, and we are a very family-oriented culture," she said. "We celebrate a lot of holidays together, we get together to cook meals. You may not live in the same city as your family, but the country is small, so you're always in driving distance. We're always visiting our families and spending a lot of time with them. In El Salvador, you're friends with everyone. You know everyone, everyone knows you – we have a strong sense of community. We hug a lot!"

While she grew up in El Salvador, Sofia made frequent trips to the United States as a young adult.

"I used to come visit my sister, she was living here," Sofia said. "And in 2001, I came here to study to learn English."

At the time, she was able to study on a tourist visa. Then when the U.S. adjusted its visa policy in 2003, Sofia got a student visa and stayed in the country to finish her education at Virginia Commonwealth University. In her English language courses, she said the group learned about life in the United States, practiced their language skills and watched old TV classics like "Leave It to Beaver" and "The Brady Bunch."

"I thought that was the life of the people in the United States," she said with a laugh. "I thought that's how people lived. But going to a college like that gave me a lot of experience – we even went on field trips like kids!"

Sofia got married in 2004, and eventually made her way to Salisbury, N.C., and to Ahold Delhaize USA. Now, working for Retail Business Services, she enjoys sharing her culture and information about El Salvador. There's a lot to appreciate – from the country's love of good food such as pupusas, to its passion for soccer and the importance of the mid-day *siesta*.

"For *siesta*, everything closes for an hour or two in the middle of the day," Sofia explained. "That's so people can go home and eat with their family, or go home and take a siesta, or nap. People take *siesta* very seriously. People go home from work and have lunch with their families."

El Salvador is an open, warm culture, and Sofia said she is happy to be able to share more about it during National Hispanic Heritage Month.

"We're a very friendly, happy culture," she said. "We are a hospitable people. We try to be the best that we can be and to make everyone – in every situation – feel welcome."