

## American Dream Award Recipients

**Victor Fernandez (educator)** – Originally from Spain, Victor is a beloved educator for Hillsborough County Public Schools for 35 years. For more than 20 years, he served as assistant principal and principal at Pierce Junior High School and Leto High School, which have some of the largest populations of Hispanic students. He has received numerous recognitions as an educator, but his legacy is his tough love and respect for his students. He is retired, but continues to serve as a mentor in education.

**Maria Jimenez (health care)** – Originally from the Dominican Republic, Maria has been a Healthcare Navigator through the University of South Florida beginning in 2013 – since the law’s implementation – and a leader in Tampa Bay in making the Affordable Care Act work for Spanish-speaking families and small businesses. Maria has volunteered her time with programs that enrich the community from an early age including Head Start, elementary schools and Tampa’s Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). In addition, she has served as a community board member at the Family Support and Resource Center. Her community-based approach includes working with local consulate(s), attending citizenship ceremonies, and attending and providing information to partners that focus on services for newly immigrated families. As a case in point, thanks to her enterprising efforts and close ties to Spanish-speaking consumers, the U.S. Secretary of Health & Human Services came to Tampa Bay to feature her work as a national model of how the Affordable Care Act can benefit minority small businesses.

**Carlos Jose Peralta (media)** – Carlos has been a popular radio personality on Spanish-language AM stations since 1977. Carlos came to Tampa from Cuba, graduated from Robinson High School and attended Hillsborough Community College. During his time on the radio, he would regularly announce toy drives for local hospitals and inform Hispanic listeners about job openings. He was the music director for 92.5 Maxima FM until 2011 and is the former host of “Buenos Dias Latino” at Mega TV Florida. Carlos continues to selflessly serve Tampa and Florida as the Community Outreach Coordinator at Lutheran Services Florida.

**Roberto Torres (entrepreneur)** – Roberto is the cofounder and managing partner of Black & Denim Apparel Company and The Blind Tiger Café in Tampa. Originally from Panama, Roberto won a local business competition that provided the startup fund he needed to create his Black & Denim clothing line. Now, Bind Tiger Café has two locations and a third is being developed as well as a corporate coffee cart program. Roberto has also been active in inspiring other local young entrepreneurs.

**Tery Sanchez** – Tery has served as an aide to U.S. Rep. Castor for 15 years, in the roles of legislative aide, caseworker and director of constituent services. Every day, she extends her compassion, tenacity and persistence to get results for our neighbors who come to U.S. Rep. Castor’s office seeking assistance to access federal benefits and services. She has served in the legal community for decades. She is originally from Cuba.