

Cargill Meat Solutions awarded two scholarships this spring to Elodia Lopez and Monica Lopez-Aguilar to help defray the costs they incurred as Morgan Community College students this year. Each young woman received a \$750 award. Both women have worked for the company and have continued their education through the MCC/Cargill Meat Solutions Workplace Education program—an onsite opportunity for education at the plant.

When she was 17 years old, Elodia Lopez came to the United States with her parents to work as a farm laborer in California. She cut grapes and packed fruit before her adventurous move to Colorado. With her husband she was encouraged to move to Fort Morgan by her sister-in-law who already lived here. The young couple was in pursuit of the dream of owning their own home—a dream now realized.

Lopez became a student of Workplace Education with the encouragement of Shirley Penn, Director of MCC/Cargill Workplace Education, who readily recognized her potential. “She was my angel,” said Lopez when referring to Penn. “I learned English and then earned my GED right here at the plant.” In her own words, Lopez said she found new ways to grow up as an employee at Cargill. “The managers at Cargill want employees to succeed here,” said this confident young woman who now works in quality assurance. “I learned a lot of self confidence with my teachers’ help.”

Elodia worked for and received her U.S. citizenship in January. She is quick to say that she wants to be a good example for her four children—a 14 year old, twins who are 10 years old and her three year old. “I want to be an ESL teacher!”

Monica Lopez-Aguilar dropped out of school before she graduated and is now a first generation college student at Morgan Community College. She too received her GED through Workplace Education at Cargill. She became a full time student in the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP) under the direction of Laura Harling. The CAMP grant provided her tuition, books and money for supplies as well as the encouragement and assistance in learning how to learn and succeed in college.

As a work-study student at MCC, Lopez-Aguilar was assigned to assist in the Workplace Education Program at Cargill. From that beginning she learned data entry skills and has since become an ESL III teacher for the program. “I owe a lot to Cargill and Shirley Penn. They have helped me out,” said Monica who at 13 learned Spanish as her second language at home when her mother married a Spanish-speaking man.

Monica’s work at Valley View Villa as a nursing assistant for two years introduced her to the field of healthcare. She enjoyed helping people and giving them the attention they needed. She now aspires to become a registered nurse and will begin the first level of that program this fall at MCC.

Cargill Meat Solutions will award two more scholarships this fall to two more deserving applicants. For applications and more information about the scholarships students can contact Mary Ginther at CMS.