

## **Minnie Rodriguez joins Baby Bear Hugs staff**

Written by Chris Lee

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Fun loving and outgoing Minnie Rodriguez has been hired as the new bilingual home visitor for Baby Bear Hugs in Phillips County.

Baby Bear Hugs is a 501 (c)3 non-profit organization that provides expectant, new and seasoned parents with support and education about their new babies and children up to age 3. Services are provided through personal in-home visits or group support.

Baby Bear Hugs also provides connections to community support systems. Eight counties in northeast Colorado have a Baby Bear Hugs office. In addition to Phillips County, there are offices in Elbert, Lincoln, Logan, Morgan, Sedgwick, Washington and Yuma counties.

Baby Bear Hugs began in Yuma County. In Phillips, it was originally called Baby's First Steps.

In addition to home visitations, the program conducts ages and stages screening, healthy living, nurturing parenting classes and nurse visits.

Coordinator Pam Gibbs said in any given month they visit around 30 families. Visits are not based on income and anyone is invited to take advantage of the services at Baby Bear Hugs.



**Minnie Rodriguez recently joined the staff at Baby Bear Hugs in Phillips County as a bilingual home visitor. She is pictured at the office next to the new logo for the program. □ □**

**—Enterprise photo**

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The program began when a teen mom had become pregnant and was sort of shunned by the community. Some women found out about it and came together to help the young mom get through her pregnancy. It sort of grew from there.

Rodriguez said the organization has been after her for some time now and she figured it was about time to hop on board. She joins Kathy Cook as a home visitor.

Rodriguez will be working with the Hispanic community. "I'm excited about that," she noted.

Rodriguez has been deeply involved within the community. She is a contact for Foodbank of the Rockies and Phillips County Sheriff's Office as a translator. She is also very active with First Baptist Church where she is a Sunday School teacher.

Rodriguez grew up in the area as part of a migrant family. She said her bilingual trait has helped numerous people in the area.

"I know a lot of people, a lot of people know me," Rodriguez added. "I think Baby Bear Hugs is really neat."

Rodriguez said she loves people and enjoys finding out about their lives, so this position is perfect for her.

"I think to work for Baby Bear Hugs you have to have a passion for families," Gibbs said, and she knows that Rodriguez is a perfect fit. "I'm really excited."

Rodriguez has already done a couple home visits and has absolutely enjoyed it. She is chomping at the bit to continue helping people through her visits.

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Rodriguez is married to Domie and she has sons Jonathan and Nathan and daughter Janel who lives in Lamar.

Gibbs said the program in Phillips County has a very strong support group in the form of an advisory committee. Members include Linda Jelden, Debbie Brandt, Pat Hale, Joe Kinnie, Susan Roll Walters, Cecilia Marquez and Lori Lundgren.

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