



## *HLC Accreditation Evidence*

Title: U.S. Citizenship

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Document Summary:

## Mexico native earns U.S. citizenship through Barton naturalization classes

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Great Bend entrepreneur Miriam Garcia's days of renewing her work visa will soon be over, and she'll officially be a U.S. citizen.

Garcia's mother brought her to the United States from Mexico more than a decade ago to escape a difficult life circumstance in pursuit of a brighter future. Her mother worked at a meat packing plant in Dodge City to support the family. After graduating high school, Garcia landed a job at a local appliance store.

As her mother promised, things were better, but Garcia had bigger plans. In late 2015, she opened a taco and burrito food truck on the west side of Great Bend called Tacos Del Sol, which has quickly become a hot spot for fast Mexican food.

Shortly after opening her business, she decided the United States, specifically Great Bend, was home, and began the process of earning citizenship through naturalization.

"I'm not planning on leaving here," she said. "I'm done renewing my visa. I plan on living here forever."

Coordinator of Adult Education Chris Lemon said the process to obtain U.S. Citizenship is not easy.

The process is only available to permanent residents who have lived in the U.S. for five years. Candidates must pass extensive background checks by the Department of Homeland Security.

It involves extensive paperwork followed by an interview. The interview consists of 10 questions about U.S. civics and proof of basic English fluency. Barton Community College's citizenship program helps candidates prepare for the interview and learn the material necessary to pass. From start to finish, it can take anywhere from six months to several years.

"My instructor was a great help," she said. "It was amazing the way she explained things so I could remember them. She was very patient and nice."

Garcia passed and will be participating in the local naturalization ceremony Friday at noon at Fort Larned, Kan., which is hosted in celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US Park Service.

Garcia will be joined by fellow Barton citizenship student Adriana Busch of Hays.