Alumni Highlight: Lupe Vargas-Garcia, violin

How did you first become involved with Apple Hill?

I first became involved with Apple Hill through the Young Strings Program in Dallas. I was a junior in high school and had never had the opportunity to travel to a music camp. It took some convincing of my parents to allow me to attend the camp; I was the baby of the house and had never traveled alone besides my parents being very over-protective, which I appreciate now. I went to Apple Hill and fell in love with the music, people, place, and food all while being home-sick.

I would call my parents every day and give them the update of my music adventures and assure them I was fine, learning a lot, and having so much fun! I was so impressed and amazed by all the talent around me and was so inspired to practice more. I knew this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for me. Little did I know I would return every summer for seven years, then seven years later, attend with my husband and first-born in my womb!

What are you doing now?

I am now the head orchestra and mariachi director at W. E. Greiner MS Academy for the Exploratory Arts Academy, my middle school alma-mater, where I teach and prepare students for concerts, competitions, and special performances. My husband and I also manage a mariachi named Mariachi Lone Star where I play the violin, the button accordion, and sing on the weekends.

What is it like?

It is amazing to give back to the community I grew up in! I attended this middle school years ago and now that I am the head director it feels like a dream. It's beautiful to see the growth of our students from 6th to 8th grade and inspire them to continue to play their instrument in high school and beyond. I am very proud to be able to send many of my students to Apple Hill year after year to continue to be inspired. I also started a student mariachi band at the school 11 years ago as an after school club which is now an official cluster in the schools fine arts academy due to its rapid growth and popularity in the city of Dallas. The mariachi and orchestra are now award-winning well known programs.

How has what you learned at Apple Hill helped you in what you do now?
Apple Hill helped shaped my future as did the Dallas Young Strings. My heart was set to be a police officer or detective but when I went to Apple Hill as a senior in high school I knew that I wanted to teach. I loved to see how the coaches brought together a group of musicians and made beautiful music within only days. That's what I strive to do with my students every day.

Can you tell us about one of your favorite Apple Hill memories?

There are too many great memories at Apple Hill to just pick one. When I left Apple Hill they kept part of my heart and summer couldn't come any faster. I had the AH Syndrome. One of my favorite Apple Hill memories was getting to meet people from around the world. Making connections and friends for a lifetime through music! I never knew how music could open so many doors in my life. Meeting my husband was one of them. I have not been back to AH since 2013 but it is about time for me to get back up there with my husband and two sons. Thank you AH for inspiring us all to be better musicians and uniting the world through music!