**José Rojas-Marín**

Taking the road less traveled just seems to come naturally to José Rojas-Marín. Born into a family of doctors, José broke the mold when he decided to study engineering. While José didn’t inherit his father’s career as his older siblings did, he did learn from his father the importance of following a dream. José’s father grew up in a small town in Venezuela where the main occupation was fishing, but José’s grandfather encouraged his son, José’s father, to leave the fishing village and pursue a career in medicine. Years later this independent nature was evident in José as he discovered in himself a “spirit to travel” that led him to visit Italy at age 15 with his aunt and uncle. After earning a degree in civil engineering, he again left his native Venezuela to travel abroad stopping in European destinations such as Germany, Holland, and Finland before settling in Barcelona to earn his master’s degree in business management.

In 2007 José accepted a job at an engineering company in the United States and shortly thereafter began taking ESOL classes at Lone Star College to refine his English skills. José enjoyed both the people and the facilities on the CyFair campus. From the relaxing “riverside” vista to the well-equipped language lab, José believes the campus has something to offer everyone. In addition, José enjoyed connecting with international classmates and well-prepared, caring teachers in a variety of subjects ranging from oral communication to reading to specialty classes such as the TOEFL preparation course. The teacher of that class, Professor Carolyn Ho remarked, "Jose was a great student in my class. He was goal oriented and was very diligent. Most of all, he was very friendly with everyone in the class and was ready to help and support his peers. He was a pleasure to work with!"

It is this same action-oriented drive and concern for others that landed José on the local news. Commuting to his job in Houston’s energy corridor, José noticed that several lights along I-10 were not working. While most people would have simply complained to themselves about the darkness, José took the initiative and contacted the local CBS news station, KHOU, to report the problem. KHOU forwarded the concern to the Texas Department of Transportation, and the lights were fixed within a week. José was featured in the news broadcast and was quoted as saying, “If you don't have the lights, you are in a bad situation, and you could have an accident." After the repairs were made, José stated, “I'm really happy because it's not only for me, it's for everybody."

This pro-active attitude is also seen in the advice José would give to other language learners. Everyone is busy with their jobs and their families, but you have to invest time in yourself in order to succeed at learning English. Arrange your schedule so that you have time to do your homework and immerse yourself in the English language by watching TV in English, going to an English-speaking church, and making English-speaking friends. Don’t be afraid. Make a commitment to improve your skills and never give up.