GLASS & METAL ALLIANCE

BERARDO FLORES

EL SALVADOR NATIVE & GLAZIER SINCE 2003

SPOTLIGHT

"Every day, there's a different challenge. I learn something from each brother and sister, it doesn't matter if the member is an apprentice or a 30-year veteran."

Hometown **Levittown, Pa.**

Family **Wife Silvia; daughters Gabriela (25) and Nayeli (9); son Aimar (3)**

Favorite Sports Team **New England Patriots**

ABOUT BERARDO

Berardo Flores grew up in El Salvador, which underwent a brutal civil war from 1979 to 1992 and was further devastated by natural disasters and social inequity. Despite being Central America's smallest country, nestled on the Pacific coast between Guatemala and Honduras, El Salvador is the most densely populated in the region. According to the Migration Policy Institute, nearly 1.4 million people have immigrated to the U.S. from El Salvador. Among that number is Berardo, who came to the U.S. in 1988 and became a citizen shortly thereafter.

STROKE OF LUCK

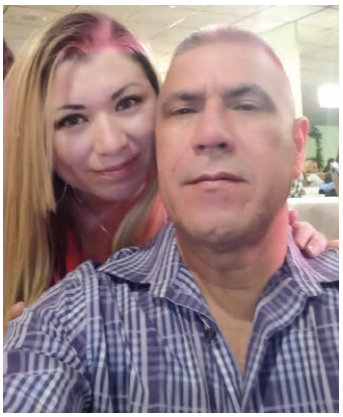
Berardo attended Instituto Nacional Alberto Masferrer La Reina Chalatenango in El Salvador before coming to the U.S. He held many jobs in his early career in America, from landscaping and warehouse work to residential painting. The jobs were enough to put food on the table but did not offer benefits or a long-term path to financial stability.

By stroke of luck, Berardo's cousin lived next door to a leader in District Council 21 (DC21) and suggested he explore a union career. Berardo admitted he knew nothing about unions – or glazing – but pursued the opportunity. "I never realized I could have benefits like being represented or being treated right," he said. In 2001, Berardo started his glazing career at National Glass & Metal Company, Inc. After a few months, he knew glazing was where he wanted to be. Berardo underwent his apprenticeship from 2003 until 2007 and has been working hard as a glazier ever since.

A CHALLENGE EVERY DAY

"I'm a glazier and I get the job done," Berardo explains. He has worked in virtually all aspects of glazing, from receiving and unloading deliveries to cutting glass and fabricating frames to installing glazing systems in the field. He loves the opportunity given to him and the ability to say he has contributed to projects around the region, including such landmarks as the new Arthaus Philadelphia luxury condominium tower in Center City. "Every day, there's a different challenge. I learn something from each brother and sister, it doesn't matter if the member is an apprentice or a 30-year veteran."

Left to right: Berardo with his wife Silvia, son Aimar, and daughter Nayeli; Berardo with his daughter Gabriela; Berardo and Silvia; Nayeli practicing for her own construction career



FAVORITES

Berardo enjoys working in the shop and caulking, because he believes adequate preparation and a good seal are keys to a successful installation. He also loves the group setting, laughter, and brotherhood of the union. "We even do a little bit of busting each other's bubbles," he says with a chuckle, acknowledging that being a die-hard Patriots fan causes a certain amount of ribbing among his Eagles-loving coworkers.

ADVICE TO OTHERS

The average construction laborer in El Salvador makes around $12/day. By contrast, glaziers of Local Union 252 make a living wage plus benefits. Berardo says he has the conversation quite often that few other jobs present such financial security for someone with only a high school diploma. He regularly encourages others to join the union. "The only thing a person needs to be a glazier is the willingness to work hard," he says. "Even as an apprentice, you are ahead of the game." Advice Berardo shares with others includes the qualities that have branded him a go-getter: always be on time, be ready to adapt to any situation, be prepared with materials and tools, and be ok with doing the unpopular tasks that need to get done.

GOOD REPUTATION

Berardo has built a solid reputation as a hard worker. Foreman Hayward Kittrell, who has overseen Berardo on several jobs, said, "He's loyal and dependable and extremely hard working." GMI Contractors, Inc. Owner Jim McDonald echoed the sentiment, "He's a very hard worker who doesn't stop." Retired foreman George Houston led Berardo at both the FMC Tower and Comcast Technology Center. Houston called Berardo "dedicated to his craft." DC21 Health & Safety Coordinator Dave Tomczak had the pleasure of working with Berardo on several assignments before shifting to his current role. "It was obvious Berardo was a hard worker, but his love for his family and friends is what I think of when talking about him. He's just a great all-around guy."

AMERICAN DREAM

"I love working as a glazier. I like the benefits that support my family and enable me to pay all my bills," said Berardo. Working as a union glazier allowed Berardo to support and visit family in El Salvador, where he met his wife in 2010. They married in 2014 and he was able to bring her to the U.S. to share his American Dream. They live in Levittown, Pa., with their two children, 9-year-old Nayeli and 3-year-old Aimar, and Berardo's 25-year-old daughter Gabriela. The family enjoys spending time together playing soccer and biking. Berardo loves family time, whether it means eating dinner together, playing in the pool, or watching Tom & Jerry cartoons (Nayeli's favorite).

HELP AT ANY COST

Colleagues share that Berardo understands tough times, but his resilience shines. He is always willing to help others at any cost, even if a person needs the shirt off his back. Berardo's attitude has been rewarded by help from others, particularly with improving his English skills.

"Many have helped me. This is what the world needs. If everyone helps one another, we would be in a better place."