



Grisell Aleman

I was born in México City, Mexico. At the age of 13 our family moved to the city of Mérida, México. In Mérida, my parents started a screen-printing business and later ventured into tourism. My parent's tourism business started as a City Tour using picturesque colored buses. This is where I got to work on occasion as a young teenager. That is when I fell in love with Mérida and its history. I studied graphic design and advertising in Mérida and worked as an advertising assistant until I had my own design office. I met Derrick, my current husband back in 1998 while he was vacationing in Cancún. After a one-year long term relationship I went to live in NY and studied English in Stony Brook University. The following year we got married. We lived in Long Island NY for 16 years. We have 2 children Maya, 18 years old and Carlos, 15 years old. While in NY, I worked in NYC at a Hispanic newspaper making designs. Fate had me later working as an office manager in a company that offered therapies to children with disabilities. In 2015, our family moved to Sarasota and it was one of the best decisions as the climate is more suited to my liking. I started working as a product photographer and designer at a local vitamin company. I was shocked and happily surprised when I discovered that Mérida and Sarasota are sister cities. With no prior knowledge, I thought, what are the odds of that? In 2019 I met Mike Fehily at a local radio station event showcasing dancers from México where we exchanged contact information. Soon after he invited me to participate in the Association of Sister Cities. I first started as an assistant to Mike where we worked very well as a team, especially for the celebration of the Tenth Anniversary of the Sister Cities of Mérida and Sarasota. This year Mike offered me the role of Merida City Director position. Mike will continue as the Assistant and help guide me with all his knowledge and wisdom going forward.