

NEWS

317 Project: In business and in life, they found ways to 'create something out of nothing'

**Rashika Jaipurkar**

Indianapolis Star

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The 317 Project tells stories of life in all of Indianapolis' vibrant neighborhoods – 317 words at a time.

Daniel Figueroa sits, head down with tremendous focus on resizing a ring at D&L Jewelry & Repair. A magnifying optivisor helps his eyes inspect the granular detail work. A ring mandrel and hammer allow him to chip away at the silver metal band.

Too gentle and the metal won't move. Too strong and the ring will be ruined.

Across the hall, Laura Gutierrez stands behind a display counter, answering calls and greeting customers.

"We're *inside* Lafayette Square Mall," she clarifies for a caller.

"Oro de verdad?" ("Real gold?") one woman asks, as she surveys the shop's shiny offerings. Yes, Laura replies.

317 Project: Dancers come to slay, gain confidence in Saucy Stiletto class

The couple fell in love in Mexico nearly three decades ago. Laura was eager to continue her family's legacy in the jewelry business. Daniel grew up in Taxco, a "silver city" renowned for its silver production.

"I (saw) how beautiful it was to work," Daniel said. "You can create something out of nothing."

They did the same with their dreams.

In the face of adversity, they learned how to turn dust into diamonds. Moving to the U.S. with a baby boy and no money. Struggling for years in Chicago, at times, going days without food and nights without enough blankets. They found other jobs over the years, but surviving was not enough.

Their entrepreneurial spirit kept them longing for more.

Indianapolis: 317 Project: Music fills her days — and the Lord fills her music

"We always (thought) of opening our business," Laura said. "We always dreamed together."

Moving to Indianapolis launched a brighter chapter.

"Angels" along the way helped, offering not only financial support and mall space, but a chance to prove themselves. The west-side mall became their ground for growth and prosperity. They opened their own store, "D&L," just as they scrawled on a napkin years ago as young lovebirds.

"This work ... is the one that I love the most," Daniel said. "We work with the heart and with the soul."

Contact Rashika Jaipurkar at rjaipurkar@gannett.com and follow her on Twitter @rashikajpr.