

NORDSTROM

The Right Fit at Nordstrom: Q&A with Store Manager Griselda Casillas

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[Shoes That Fit](#) is an important cause for more than just the kids receiving new shoes, it's also important to our people across Nordstrom. We spoke with Griselda Casillas, store manager of Nordstrom Rack Downtown Seattle, on why she is especially proud of Nordstrom's involvement and overall value of giving back to the communities we serve.

You have a strong connection to Shoes That Fit —why is that?

I came to the U.S. from Mexico when I was six years old, and we didn't have anything. It was really impactful to get a new clothing item or pair of shoes. We almost always got hand-me-down clothes, but I vividly remember my first day of kindergarten because my parents saved up to by me a new pair of shoes. I didn't speak English, didn't know anyone at the school and was so scared, but those shoes gave me some confidence and made me feel better. It was a sacrifice by my parents to save for me to get a new pair of shoes, which is why I'm so touched that Nordstrom does this for others. New shoes change a child's perspective and gives them confidence in such an important way, and that's what they did for me.

In past years, we would go to measure the kids' feet in-person and it's such an amazing experience. We saw kids with shoes two sizes too big or too small, with holes in the bottom so their socks get wet. It's really heartbreaking. When we returned to give them the shoes, and they actually remembered us —that's the best part. I still remember one of the girls yelling "you're back, you're back!" And when we left, all the kids were hugging us. Kids don't understand their circumstances, so they just felt special that they were receiving a new pair of shoes.

I'm a mom, and I always talk to my kids about giving back. I remind them that they're blessed and need to find ways to give back. I'm so glad I work for a company that values giving back, as well.

What was your journey like getting to your current role at Nordstrom?

I've been with Nordstrom for 16 years and am currently the store manager at the Nordstrom Rack in Downtown Seattle. I started in the Men's department at a Nordstrom Rack in Sacramento and was there for about a week. Because of my passion to serve customers from head to toe, my store manager thought I'd be a better fit working at a Nordstrom Full-Line store, so I transferred.

I had never been to a Nordstrom store before, so when I walked in, I thought it was the most beautiful store I'd ever seen. Because I come from a very low-income family, I'd never seen anything of this magnitude and was so nervous and questioned if I belonged there. However, everyone was incredibly welcoming that I knew that I was at home.

I worked there while in school and once I graduated with my degree in pre-med, I thought I would go to med school. After my first semester for my masters, I knew I wanted to stay with Nordstrom and returned back to work there. I continued to grow my career at the company because there is so much opportunity here and eventually held several store manager roles until I got the opportunity to work where I am now -- the flagship Rack store in Downtown Seattle. I honestly cried when they offered me this position because I couldn't believe that the same little girl who couldn't speak English on her first day of school could overcome so many obstacles and become the store manager of this flagship. It's an honor. It's so crazy.

A big reason why I wanted to come to Seattle was because of Blake Nordstrom. Everything he represented was what I wanted to be. I got the offer right when he passed, so it was incredibly bittersweet. He still represents everything I want to be in a leader.

How does the passion for giving translate to your store team?

A lot of our employees come from communities that need organizations like Shoes That Fit, so they're already able to relate to the cause and are super passionate about it. I asked my employee that usually raises the most money how she's able to be so successful, and she said that she truly believes in the cause and that customers can tell when she talks to them. They're not going to donate to someone who doesn't actually believe in the cause or is asking for donations because they have to.

I am proud that my team believes in what we're doing, and that changes everything.

Why do you think Nordstrom cares so much about giving back?

Who you work for needs to be able to reflect your values —Nordstrom's values always go back to the customer and the community. That's why I love working here. You almost feel a responsibility to give back to your community when you work at Nordstrom. I could've gone on to continue my education, but instead I was drawn to Nordstrom because they care about the people they work with. I have five employees that just celebrated twenty years of service at the same store —there's a reason why so many people have a long career here at Nordstrom. It's our culture.

How have things been different with COVID-19?

With all that's happening, our teams wondered if we could raise as much as we have in the past for Shoes that Fit. I told them it's all about a mindset, so they believed in themselves and have now surpassed our goal. We're giving back more during this time of year because our people want to find more ways to give back themselves. With our reopening, we learned to be kinder to each other and find ways to be a better leader, coworker, peer and person. Organizations and causes like Shoes That Fit serve as a reminder for that and to show that it's not just about us —it's about everyone else.