



ANGELA'S SUCCESS STORY

Angela and her family moved to Lake County when she was eleven years old. They lived in a community without many children or ethnic minorities, and within the Hispanic community they were one of the only Salvadorian families. Her single mother raised her and her two brothers while working and making use of supportive resources like cash aid, food stamps and Section 8 housing. When Angela was in 10th grade, at the age of 15, she became pregnant. The option available to her at the time for finishing high school as a pregnant/parenting teen was a continuation school, but she wanted to take honors classes and French so her mother advocated for her to be allowed to continue on as a student at Lower Lake High School. At first her mother tried to help her with child care during the day so she could attend classes, but sometimes Angela would miss school because her mother needed to work. During her junior and senior years of high school the Teen Parenting Program and a group of teachers, who saw Angela's potential, worked together to solve that problem. Each day, Angela and her baby would be picked up by the PALS bus which would drop them off at the continuation school's day care, then she would walk to school, leave early at lunch and walk to the daycare to nurse her baby and return to school, leaving a little early at the end of the day to go pick up her baby and catch the bus from the continuation school to her home. Angela did her senior project on the topic of quality child care and she graduated with honors and a healthy two-year-old. Even though she loved school, she had previously believed that college was beyond her reach, but the advocates in the Teen Parenting Program helped her to look into her options and see what was possible. Through scholarships and grants, Angela went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Pacific Union College in early childhood education and a master's degree in leadership in early childhood education from Brandman University. During the years she worked toward those educational goals, she worked full-time, had two more children, experienced a period of domestic violence and relied on a strong support network of friends and family to help her recover and stay on track. She is proud that she was able to do all of these things without using welfare assistance or food stamps, but acknowledges that it would have been easier if she had. Today, Angela's three children have all graduated from high school and are successful, kind adults and she is the coordinator for the Lake County Child Care Planning Council and Quality Care Counts where she oversees a team of early childhood education coaches who are helping to improve the quality of children's experiences in day cares, preschools, and family child care homes across Lake County.

IN ANGELA'S OWN WORDS

What would you tell other people in Lake County about what is most important to your success? How would you encourage them? My mother was an inspiration for me in many ways. She went back to school and got her GED at the age of 30 while working full time, to set an example for us and her

advocacy for me in my own education showed me how to advocate for my children later on. Our community is small, but it is mighty. People will help you if you allow them to. You can go far if you are willing to work hard and ask for help. I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't allowed the Teen Parenting Program and my teachers, who saw my potential, to help me.

What kept you from giving up when things were hard? My children are my driving force, 100%. I never wanted them to feel as lost and scared as I had. I knew that if I gave up on myself during the hard times, I was also giving up on them because they depended on me. The small, tight knit community of Lake County made it easier too. The early childhood education community is very supportive and they want to see each other succeed.

What are you most looking forward to, now that your life is on a different path and what makes you feel most equipped to keep moving in a positive direction? Making a positive change in our community! I have a vision for our community and for our children to thrive. I want to see parents more engaged in raising their children and involved in their children's education. I feel like we've lost that connection and I am in a position to help make a difference now. Too many times people fail to see the positives in our community because they are blocked by the negatives, but I see the potential for a bright future here and I want others to see it too. I feel equipped to make a difference because I hold on to hope and I see the good in this community. Those things keep me going. Working together, we will see it through.