

Martha's Story



I came to America from a small town in Mexico. I was working as a teacher. It was so sad there -- no resources. Getting a job here was better than staying in Mexico, but I had to leave my family. My mom and my family are still there.

I was new to the country. For three years here I was a stranger. I felt very lonely when I got here. I had no friends and no family. I wanted to go home to Mexico. I was struggling with depression at the time. Family Network really helped me to connect with a community. Here at Family Network, we share experiences a lot. It helps. You're not alone. You have new friends. This place has become my other home.

I began coming for the program when my 8-year old was a baby. At the time, he didn't talk. I started to worry. I didn't know anyone.

No one I knew could help me. I came to Family Network for *Right from the Start*. I was one of the moms who took the Family Network van here every day. Family Network brought in a speech therapist. She gave us good information. They helped me connect to an agency to get speech therapy. They evaluated my son, worked with a therapist and found a school with a therapist. He is speaking now.

After I started classes at Family Network, I started to become happy. I felt like I could have a life here. Every year, they are offering more programs. It's more about the whole family. The fatherhood curriculum is great. As our kids are growing up, they're finding ways to add programs for older kids. My kids are getting a good education. They're taking classes at the art center. They love to read. They love to go to school.

Everyone says the same thing. *We are grateful*. The staff at Family Network helps with anything. I'm a volunteer. I'm grateful. I want to give back. As volunteers, we bring ideas. We're a big group of moms with big ideas. Family Network serves 250 families. We read, sing, and involve parents to play with their children. We're looking forward to doing more.

Why is Family Network important? Isolation destroys a family. With depressed moms, kids suffer. You have to learn how to raise your child. They love America. You have to teach them to love America and Mexico. We don't want them to forget about Mexico. They learn English and Spanish. It's a gift.

Coming to Family Network changed my life. I was alone and depressed. I had no contact with the world. In my mind, I was still in Mexico. I wasn't here. I wasn't involved. It was like I was living outside my life. When I started to come to Family Network, my life changed. I learned English. I started to connect with my community. I was a different person.



Martha and her sons at Family Network's field trip celebrating the Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) festivities in Chicago.