

RESIDENT ACHIEVES LIFE GOALS THROUGH HEALTHY CONNECTIONS

By Claire Hastings

When Healthy Connections (a Community Public Health Team in the San Fernando Valley) first visited Hilda at her home last year, she felt discouraged. As they explained the purpose of the visit and the health care and community support resources they could offer, Hilda tried to hold back her tears. She was overwhelmed by the responsibility of raising a child with a disability alone, without a job, with many questions, and with uncertainty about her immigration status.

Despite her discouragement, she agreed to speak with Marissa Quintanar and Jorge Santos of the Healthy Connections team. By the end of the visit, Marissa and Jorge not only provided her with resources and answers (immigration guidance, childcare for her son, and food), but also connected her with the organization that provided help when she needed it most. Hilda was even selected to speak about her experience when Univision 34 reporter Julio César Ortiz covered the community program in the fall of 2024.



Time passed, but not in vain. Hilda and Jorge recently reconnected at an outreach event in Pacoima and it was clear that the overwhelmed Hilda had long gone. In her place appeared a much more determined and assertive woman, making progress on documentation, hunting for a better job, and filled with hope and purpose. She asked for advice on an upcoming appointment with an immigration judge and support for finding a job closer to home. This time she didn't have to hold back her tears, but rather a smile and the joy of being on the right path. And she felt ready to get more involved with Healthy Connections by joining their Community Advisory Committee.

As Hilda's life improved, she set new goals and planned next steps. She is currently seeking a job that would allow her to continue taking her child to and from daycare. Next, she hopes to access housing assistance to find a more suitable place to live. She also plans to obtain legal services to guide her through her immigration process.

The Community Public Health Teams project is designed to build long-term relationships. We visit each household at least once a year and follow up after our first visit. Reconnecting with Hilda was powerful because after providing resources to a community member, we sometimes lose touch with them. We offer our full support hoping that they will respond to follow up and feel comfortable enough to seek information whenever they have any other questions about health and community support services.

Hilda expressed gratitude for Jorge and Marissa and their long-term commitment to support her goals. She knows so many more people need assistance but may be too afraid or not know how to ask for it and simply go on without any support. As part of the Community Advisory Committee, she shares her input on ways that Healthy Connections can reach more residents and build a connected community in the San Fernando Valley where everyone can access the resources they need to live healthier lives.