

**OHS 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
**Fran Majestic: Parent Story**

Interviewer: Can you tell us your experience with the Head Start program. How did you come to Head Start?

Fran Majestic: Sure, I would love to tell that story. You know, I've been shy about this story for a really long time. But, I really want parents to hear this story. I started in Head Start when my youngest son was three. And I was way out in the middle of the woods, in a little tiny community, and bumped into another parent at a store who said, "You should try Head Start." And I didn't want to because I didn't want my baby in school. But, in fact, I was living in some pretty serious circumstances of poverty, and I decided to go ahead and reach out and give it a try. And that's what happened. I had the most wonderful home visitor who stayed a friend for 20 years after the fact. And, you know, I started as a home visitor, probably the year that he turned four. And, I was working with preschool children. And, after I did that, our sectors switched to do center-based, and I stayed with the program, did center-based work, and I became really interested in a new program that eventually became Early Head Start -- what was first Parent and Child Center programs.

And, our Head Start director reached out to me and asked me to meet with some team parents. She thought that maybe -- as long as I was working as a home visitor, could I give a little hand to a couple of team parents, as she was thinking about writing for this Child Center program. And, I got really interested in services to infants and toddlers, something that I had recognized in the home visits I was doing. I kept wishing that we could be with families when their babies were younger, before they got to preschool, so that they had the kind of support and knowledge that they needed to really learn the joy in their kids at an early stage, and make sure that their kids knew how much they care about them.

Interviewer: So, what was it like when you went from being a home visitee to a home visitor? What, what made you want to take that step to become a home visitor?

Fran: I think it was because having a home visitor of my own helped me realize how much I actually used and gave me license to feel comfortable in parenting in a very -- it actually was different than the way that I had been parented. I had very caring parents, and you know, I could appreciate what they did for us. And I think, as I got older, I learned to appreciate more things about that. But there were many things that we had differences on -- for example, corporal punishment. And so, when I, you know, got to know my home visitor, and she helped me to understand the reasoning behind the belief system that I had, and that it was okay, it really gave me the courage to reach out and help other people explore their own belief systems, and really do thoughtful, engaged parenting with their kids, rather than just react, and playing out some of the old scripts, that really weren't ideal for them.

Interviewer: So it, like, gave your new value system, a home, like, a place to work, in a way?

Fran: It absolutely did. I have to say probably the most important thing that's happened for me up to that point was the fact that I finally got the courage to reach out, and I have had wonderful mentors. And I think you don't always know how important it is, what you say to someone. But sometimes a simple phrase, or a recognition of something that someone does is enough to give them the courage to reach out, get to know you a little bit more, and start to recognize the strengths within themselves. And

so, I plan to keep that with me for a long time. I've had several mentors. And actually, in some ways, they're too numerous to count.

A couple come to mind for me immediately. And one I met at a conference. I went to a conference as a parent with my son's kindergarten teacher -- she invited me because I liked volunteering in the classroom. Once I realized I was going to Head Start with my son, I reached out to the kindergarten teacher, and she said, "Come on in," you know, "You can, you can volunteer in the kindergarten class, as well."

And she said, "Why don't you come to this conference." I went to the conference, and I remember sitting at a table with her, and she said, "Introduce yourself."

And I said, "I'm just a parent." Because I had just heard all these teachers and professors, and all of these brilliant people talking.

And she said, "You're never just a parent."

[End video]