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Jarma Wrihten: Welcome, Dayana. Dayana Quevedo: Thank you. Jarma: And thank you for coming out to share your parent success story, because now I've learned that you have so much to share. Dayana: I do.

Jarma: A teacher, a mom, a Policy Council member, and all of those good positions... So, I'd like you to get right on in with all the exciting stuff, because I know you have so much you want to tell us about.

Dayana: Well, I've been a Policy Council delegate for three years, and I've participated in pretty much as many committees -- committees as I could -- planning committee, personnel committee. And it's done a lot for me in the fact that it's -- it's given me the tools to be able to communicate with others, to provide information, you know, that I didn't initially have, but to be able to share it later on. And the support that I get from this council is -- is wonderful. I mean you -- you bond with parents, you bond with directors, and you bond with the people that matter in this program. So I've enjoyed my time being a Policy Council member.

Jarma: And you said that since you've been in this role you've had the opportunity to really be involved in your child's life a little bit more. Dayana: Yes. Jarma: What are some of the things that you all have done to spend together time activities and how do you help other kids?

Dayana: Well, the most that I have learned is communication with my daughter. I mean, she's four-and-a-half now and there was a point in time where I wasn't available to her because I was so involved in attaining my education. But going through all the trainings and, you know, being able to speak to -- to the teachers now, and just be more involved, I'm able to communicate with her. I'm able to help her reach her feelings, find her words, and be able to sit there and - - and relate to her more.

I mean, I -- I didn't think that was possible for a long time because, you know, my mother took care of her for the good portion of her life, and I felt like I was missing something. But once I got her back into this program... She started in the Early Head Start, and the majority of the time my mom was the one doing the trainings. So I said, "Oh, that's fine. I'll let her do that," you know. But, you know, once -- now she's in preschool I'm more involved. I'm like I have to be there.

I have to be at those parent meetings. I have to be at those conferences. I have to participate more because that's the only way I'm going to get to know my daughter. And now that I know what type of person she is and some of the things that she's been lacking, I'm able to work on them more. Definitely. Jarma: So how's that changed your life?

Dayana: Well, it's changed my life in recognizing where I need to be and -- and realizing what I need to do for my daughter. And it's not just going to school, it's not just trying to maintain work, it's being there for her. It's realizing that she needs me just as much as I need her. Filling that little gap because, you know, I'm a single mom, her dad's not around, and I need to fill both roles, you know. So I'm happy to do that now because I'm -- I'm able to recognize what she needs and be able to know that I can give that to her just as much as anybody can.

Jarma: So you mentioned earlier when we were sharing that Head Start had so many valuable resources that were available to you so that you could, you know, make your path a little easier. What were some of those things?

Dayana: Well, one of them that helped me a lot was the ability to set my goals. They -- they allowed me to, within six months, state something I wanted to do, and if I did it they figured out what helped me. If I wasn't able to accomplish it at that time, what I was going to do to get there, you know, for the following year. So I -- I was able to learn the skills necessary to be able to plan and to be able to incorporate my learning and her learning together.

Because otherwise, I don't think I would have been able to do it without the program, without the teachers, without the home visits. I mean, everything that this program gave me has brought me to a different level, to where I can see my daughter's life and my life are now going to be one. And I -- I now look at it as one life.

Jarma: Mm hmm, that's very strong of a statement. You now have one life. And children tend to just take you to a whole other place, don't they? Dayana: Yes, they do. Yes, they do. Jarma: You learn so much from them. We feel like we're the teacher all the time. Dayana: Yes, yes.

Jarma: But you -- they're teaching you in the same breath. Dayana: She's teaching me a lot. Jarma: So you've learned from her? Dayana: Yes. Jarma: So what advice would you give to other parents?

Dayana: My advice -- most is be there for your child. And like teacher Natalie -- I mean, like Miss Natalie said in her speech, the one thing that's important is knowing that you are there for your child. And I've learned that. It's been a long road. It's been somewhat of a bumpy road, but altogether I'm happy that I've gone down that road. I'm happy to have learned to struggle. I'm happy to have learned that I can get through a struggle and to be able to move forward, because without that I don't think that my daughter will be able to learn in the future.

I won't be able to look at her and say, "This is what I've done, and this is what you can do." You know, to me education is -- is very important. It's life changing. And that's what I want to give to my own daughter -- is the fact that you can be on your own. You can do for yourself no matter where you've come from -- 'cause I've come from a harsh background. And I'm not going to sit there and say that I'm perfect or that I'm a perfect parent, but I've learned the skills through this program.

And I've learned a lot of ways to communicate with my own daughter and to be able to reach out to other parents, be able to tell them how important it is to be involved in their lives. Not just sit there and expect a teacher to take their role while they're gone at work, but to sit there and be there and teach them at home. Because that's what counts; that's how they grow.

Jarma: Mm hmm. That's how they grow; that's how they learn. And you have done a phenomenal job, not only for your child but for yourself. You set personal goals and you've accomplished them. Dayana: Yes. Jarma: And you're still working on them. Dayana: I'm still working on them.

Jarma: What are -- what are some of the others that you're working on now?

Dayana: Just to be able to be independent, you know. That's my main goal. And like I said, I'm -- I'm currently working on my Bachelor's; I plan to go on to my Master's. And I want to be able to sit there and -- and give my daughter everything that she deserves. She deserves the best -- every child deserves the best and this program offers that ability to give you the best. They sit there and give you those tools. They sit there and provide all the support that you could possibly need. There's people in this program that I never thought I could even go to and speak to about my problems.

But, yet, they were there listening regardless. And they sat there and supported both of us, you know. So it's -- it's like, did I really need to think that I was alone? I did at one time, but now to say that I never was alone, never once. Throughout this program, I never once was alone. I've been supported by the best people and this is the best program that I could think of. Jarma: Wow, you really summed it all nicely.

Dayana: Thank you. Jarma: And we are happy to have leaders like yourself,... Dayana: Thank you. Jarma: ...mothers like yourself who really believe in them -- in themselves. Dayana: Yes, yes.

Jarma: You -- you know what you want, you know how you want to get there, and you have it all in your mind and your heart. So I would like to say hats off to your continued growth and development... Dayana: Thank you, thank you. Jarma: ...for both you and your child and that you make -- you know, continue to be a voice for Head Start because we need more voices like yours. And we really appreciate all that you've done for Head Start because I know you just said this is your last year.

Dayana: Yes. Jarma: And we'll miss you but we appreciate you, and I want you to take all that you've learned, all the tools and resources, and continue to transfer them into the lives of other women who have... Dayana: Definitely. Jarma: ...who are on the same journey...

Dayana: Yes. Jarma: ... and those that you need to fall back and reach back and pull back and take them up with you. Dayana: Most definitely. That's what I -- I plan to share no matter what I do -- just share, share, share, and give the gift that I've been given, because it's an awesome gift.  
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