

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Jarma Wrihten: Welcome, Marjorie. I'm excited that you're here with me today to share your parent as teacher in the home story, and also give us some heads up on how you became involved in Head Start. So I'm gonna let you get started and tell us exactly all about your path.

Marjorie Gammell: Well, I got involved in Head Start -- it was a rocky road when I first got in Head Start. I was in a - a shelter because I was escaping domestic violence. It was in 2006 I escaped and I found myself in San Jose. And I wanted to, however, pursue my education in college because I didn't have that when I was in domestic violence. And I wanted to show that to my children, that even though we're -- we went through this, education is still key.

And so Head Start -- I called a little resource and referral, and it was Head Start. And I called the Ritter Park office and they -- one of the FAs came out and she gave me 10 -- 10 pages and -- of documentation for my children to get enrolled in Head Start, and that launched my path to being able to become college educated, as well as my children being able to have the value of an education -- educational system.

Jarma: So in college, where were -- what did you major in? Marjorie: My major is in child psychology and child studies. Jarma: So how -- that's totally related to everything you do as a parent and helping your children -- your children become ready for school. And -- and as you're in the role as a parent and teacher now, how do you spend you together times with your children?

Marjorie: I spend my together times usually at night time. We'll spend time just reading books and enjoying each other's company. And I'll just ask my child, which -- he's five years old now, but I'll ask him, "Can you read me a story; can you tell me a story?" And he picks up, you know, his favorite book.

This is one of his favorite books, and it's "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein. And it's pretty -- pretty graphical, and he can make up the whole story and tell me how he sees it. And it just inspires me that, at his age, he can think and he can have this vivid imagination and to come pour out just what he -- he relates to this book.

Jarma: Well, that is -- that's really great because, you know, in your effort to be the -- the greatest teacher that you are -- we always say parents are the first and most important teacher. And you are that person, and you're sitting down and you're saying "The Giving Tree" is his favorite book and he -- he understands, you know, that mommy's interested, as well. So you're engaging in that time with him. If you had to give other parents advice about how to spend that quality time with their child, what advice would you share with them?

Marjorie: I would share with them just -- sometimes we get to be just adults and we want it this way, sometimes we have to revert back to a child and think what -- what would I do if I were a child, because children are so innocent. I would just recommend just to become childlike, spend that quality time, talk to them, play roll the ball, play catch. Don't just be consumed with your -- with the outer world. Just come back. And it's -- it's really helped for the overall personality, and it brings wellness.

Jarma: It sure does bring the wellness and it's very healthy for -- for you and your child to be able to engage and have that parent-child interaction. So that's one of the things that we find as -- as a true key to any relationship, just having that one-on-one. You shared with me earlier that you are now a community rep, so what do you do in that role?

Marjorie: In that role I take resources from the community. I'm always getting resources -- people dropping cards, people dropping letters, people dropping emails saying, "How can I get involved?" So I'm taking all the knowledge back and emailing my Ritter Park contact and saying, "This is -- this is what I've gotten for this week. This is what I've gotten for a month."

It could be one or it could be 10 contacts, or just going to the Policy Council meeting and just showing this is what the community wants, this is what they want to contribute to Head Start, which is really a blessing to the children that participate in the program.

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