Obesity Prevention

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SPEAKER: The parents featured in this video live in communities from across California. They're doing their very best to raise healthy children in difficult circumstances. Most were young when they had their children. And most are single parents.

These community members discuss the many challenges that they have encountered on their journeys, and how they and their families have risen to respond. Food and housing insecurity, unsafe neighborhoods, and fragmented or inaccessible services are all discussed. In addition, the parents share their fears, anxieties, and the stress generated by these conditions.

The critical role of high quality education to support individual success and to build strong communities is emphasized by all. But most importantly, these parents sustained the core belief that they will raise their children to enjoy health and well-being, no matter how challenging the environment.

Andre is a 26-year-old man who describes himself as a black immigrant. He grew up in central California, and is culturally embedded in the valley. He has a preteen son and daughter, and is a parental figure to a number of other children. He has worked in a local nonprofit and as a journalist. Andre is a thoughtful and perceptive parent, working to make a difference in the lives of his children and youth in the valley.

ANDRE: A child's mind is like a blank book. And what he or she observes throughout the years of their life will be written on the pages of that book. And it will affect their lives profoundly.

I grew up and in Merced-- born and raised here. I am from the north side of Merced. I did four years fighting my case and then two years in the two-year behavior modification program-- so six years.

My grandmother passed away-- 2012-- Six days before my birthday. Yeah. My grandma was my mom. She would always say, read, read, read, OK? Because reading takes in information. And information leads to freedom.

It was a lot of things happening-- not a lot of good things. I grew up in a domestic home. So there was a lot of fighting going on. I would go get my sister and teach her how to draw. And we would do our little thing to avoid hearing what was going on.

What made me happy, to be honest, was the fact that she was happy. Sixth grade-- and we would go to this alleyway where they would give out-- we'd sign our name on a piece of paper. We'd stand in a long line. And then they would give us sandwich bags, and a milk. My sister, she was so embarrassed, I could tell. And so I'd be like, oh, it's all right-- just make it like it was OK, so that way, she felt comfortable. But I was embarrassed, too. I was kind of sad about it. But we had to eat.

It's still kind of marginalized, to an extent. There's a lot of criminal activity. Everything's on the north. We have the mall over here. We have FoodMaxx, Food 4 Less. You don't have that on the south. That's where the police patrol more. It's super marginalized over there.

Well, like I said, it's, like, a liquor store. Seeing the police, honestly, is traumatic. I remember, my oldest son, when he was three years old, every time we would pass by a police, he'd say, there goes the cop car. There goes the police-- like every single time. And that had me thinking, wow, my son is even acknowledging that.

It makes me feel angry and sad. The reason why I say that is because they have to grow up subjected to these things, depending on their conduct, will determine whether or not they be the next victim. That's the scary part about it.

I consider myself to just be a spiritual being, trying to find my purpose and what I'm supposed to be doing. I model the behaviors. Hopefully, they can see by how conduct myself and the things that I do. Hopefully they'll emulate. So I hope that, because of my conduct, they will be the same way.

I want to teach them to do the right thing-- conduct yourself accordingly. Even your style of dress matters. Because you might fit the particular description of one who may did a crime, or one who may be a gang member. I know I fit that description. So I teach my kids to be very respectful. And they are. They have manners like crazy.

Kids go through so much all the time. They don't necessarily know how to verbally express what they're going through. They might have a lot of things on their mind that they don't know how to express. So be more attentive, and if I see certain behaviors that I don't want them to display, I'll call them on it immediately.

I'm very tough on my kids I don't have to raise my voice or anything of that nature. They respect it. And then they stop. And then they change it.

People are looking at us like, look, he can't raise his kids right, or something. And I'm like, no, no, no, no, no, no, we're not going to do that. We are well-mannered. We know how to conduct ourselves.

Teach them about their culture, since it's not taught. And so it gives you a sense of pride and things of that sort, knowing your culture. Kids have their way of letting you know. But you have to pay attention. A lot of parents don't pay attention. If you don't pay attention, then they're going to eventually do negative things to get your attention. Because negative attention is better than no attention.

I see a lot of-- like, if my son fell, and he came to me, crying, then I'm going to show him some of my wounds, and I'm going to say, yeah, I fall all the time. I hit my knee. And it's OK to cry. That's OK.

Because when I was a kid, if I cried, it was like, boy, shut up. You ain't supposed to be crying. You supposed to be tough. But that's not right. Because you're raising me to become numb to those emotions, when in fact it's OK to cry.

That's very important with young men. Because if not, they're just going to grow up, and, like I said, be numb to those emotions. And that could essentially make them have violent behavior-- something that we need to veer away from in marginalized communities. Because we're already perceived to be violent people.

Well, I mean, in marginalized communities, you don't see the father in the homes. They're absent. They're in prison. They're in the streets. They're passed away. You don't necessarily see a lot of fathers in the home.

And so All Dads Matter is that source where the fathers can go and get the proper help and positive reinforcement, and not only that, the acknowledgment that, hey, you're doing a good job as a father. Because not all of us know how to raise our children. A lot of us are doing the best that we can, because we're only raising our children the best way that we know how, because of how our parents raised us. You know what I mean?

And so at times, we might think it's OK for our children to curse, or for us to put our hands on our children, and things of that nature, because our parents did that to us. We have to learn to not repeat that particular cycle. And we have to learn the correct way-- the correct positive reinforcements, and things of that nature.

You know, they love school. They're excelling in school. I'm proud of that. [LAUGHS]

SPEAKER: Kiara, 22, and her 29-year-old husband Thryllel have three children under the age of six. The African-American family moved from Oakland to a city in the Central Valley, and then to a very small town, in order to give their children a better quality of life, and a safer environment. Thryllel has an injury which prevents him from working, and so he is a stay-at-home dad, leading the homeschooling of their oldest child, while Kiara works two jobs. They are focused, thoughtful parents, determined to provide a bright future for their children.

KIARA: Well, I moved from Maryland to Virginia, then Oakland, where my husband was born from. And then we moved here. So we just moved to Merced because it was cheaper. And then we ended up liking it, so we stayed longer.

SPEAKER: Kiara describes why she and her family moved away from Oakland.

KIARA: It's very expensive. Yeah, and not a place to raise kids. [LAUGHS] Before I moved here, I made sure I researched all them places around me, because I didn't have a vehicle. So I researched all the places, which-- they had a Golden Valley that was five minutes away. And they had the WIC-- two things that I needed. And they had a couple of stores.

So the WIC-- that was five minutes away. Like, they were right across the street-- the doctors the WIC. So that was good. For me, that was good.

And with the stores and everything-- I didn't have a vehicle. I used have to walk everywhere and catch the bus and all that. So it was a lot. It took me 30 minutes to get to the grocery store on the bus. And it's, like, 30 minutes back-- and then having to walk, like, five minutes to my house. And then out of nowhere, a lady at the church gave us a car.

They told me about a housing program for, like, six months. They pay your rent for six months. Well, they paid it for three months. And then the good thing is, after three months, they'll pay half. You pay the other half-- like, to get you self-sufficient to pay your own rent.

SPEAKER: Kiara and Thryllel are very focused on a safe environment for their children, and so have moved to a very small town which promises a measure of safety.

KIARA: Very difficult-- especially if you're not from here, and you don't know where the safest places are. Further out-- nowhere-- nothing. And that made me feel like, oh, yeah, that's a safe place. Every place is bad, but you gotta put yourself in a position where you're not, like, in it.

I got my high school diploma. And I got some jobs. When I didn't have a job, it was overwhelming-- like, bills, and stuff like that. But then when I got the one job, it started getting better. It would better for my children to do stuff.

I used to go to one store, because it was so overwhelming, walking with my kids and stuff. So I went to Grocery Outlet. They had, like, nice things, and different things that I wanted to give my children, like box of yogurt that are decent priced and nice looking. It doesn't have any flies flying over it. Because I went to one store. They had-- it was nasty-- so nasty.

And I couldn't do anything about it. I couldn't get it, because I didn't have a car, so it was the only place I could go to. It was so bad. We were running out of food. Like we had some, but it was like it was just leaving. So we went to Food Pantry. That was something that I dealt with.

All of us eat healthy. I just go off of what they like. And then it all comes together, I guess.

THRYLLEL: I did a WIC class-- good fundamentals on eating healthy, as far as-- from youth to grown up.

KIARA: We're always on the same page. I don't know. I think it's just being older and learning from life. He's with them 24/7 when I'm working. It's fun. But it gets overwhelming, with school and stuff, and then working, and all that.

I worked eight to five. And by the time I got home, it's, like, 7:00 almost.

SPEAKER: Kiara and Thryllel are homeschooling their oldest, because they were not confident that the local school was providing quality instruction.

THRYLLEL: And that was the only reason why I started going to homeschooling him. Because he was getting at home faster than he was at pre-K.

KIARA: He has an hour for each class. And he has, like, six classes.

THRYLLEL: Patience. You have to set a real schedule for kids, especially when you have different ages. You just tell them, stop, stop. And they don't know what to stop. You have to show them what to stop doing. So it's all a process.

I'm trying to bring my family up with them knowing God-- make sure you be grateful for everything, no matter if it's just a piece of paper and a crayon. That's what I try to teach my kids. And I can say that it is working. I can say they have their own mind.

And I'm kind of proud of that. And I try to tell my oldest son, they're doing what you're doing. You're the example. So make sure you're doing what you have to do, and they'll do it.

I get ideas from other people, or people that I've seen that had both parents in their family-- faith. It's not hard to raise kids. It's all about the opportunity and the patience that you give them. If you don't have faith, you won't have none of those. You would just go AWOL. By me talking to God, helping me to guide myself through life will also guide my kids.

My main focus is to try to just keep a two-parent, happy home. You either have one that's never there or one lost to jail or gun violence. To prevent mine from going through anything like that, I want to try to keep them on the right path.

KIARA: The All Dads Matter, All Moms Matter-- I've been gone for a long time, they still know who I am.

SPEAKER: Thryllel emphasizes the active engagement of service systems staff with their clients, and the importance of being passionate about their work.

THRYLLEL: If you pull up someone's file, it should come to you like that. But it has to be their passion. If it's not their passion for it, they won't know anything about you.

SPEAKER: All Dads Matter and All Moms Matter are programs of the Merced County Human Services Agencies. These programs were referenced by Andre, Kiara, and Mimi as being important to helping parents to gain the skills and supports to be able to raise fully healthy children. In this segment, Lamar Henderson, Program Coordinator for All Dads Matter, shares the history of the program and his vision of the importance of involving and supporting dads in children's lives.

Lamar also tells us about the thought behind creating the All Moms Matter program. We hear from Rachel Miller, Lorraine Nishihama, and Kiara, who was a volunteer with All Moms. They talk about helping young and teen moms to learn needed skills, and to become ready and confident to raise healthy children.

LAMAR HENDERSON: Merced County Human Services Agencies follow the program All Dads Matter. It started from a need to further serve families and children within the community. Originally, the conversation was coming out of, how can we better serve children through the

child welfare system? And are we really taking advantage of all the potential supports and resources for these children?

And one of the things that we realized-- that we may be doing our children an injustice if we're not including the paternal side of their support and their family. But what we also examined was, there also needs to be some appropriate support for those paternal sides, including the father, and seeing fathers as more of an asset, and less as a deficit, as it relates to the development of our children.

You know, the dads that come to the All Dads Matter fatherhood program come from a variety of different resources and socioeconomic backgrounds. We can have teen dads that are trying to develop their relationship with their children and their confidence, and understanding what a healthy relationship might look like, to a UC Merced professor, who may be great with numbers and research, but struggle with personal relationships.

I really am a testament to our ability to provide a safe space, where men can come and say, these are some subjects or some challenges that, previously, I had no place to talk about, that, now, I can freely discuss in a safe environment. My confidentiality is protected. And at the same time, I want to get practical and useful techniques, strategies, and advice that I can apply immediately, and start getting results.

Violence is always an underlying issue. And that violence could have been a witness to domestic violence, be it upon the parent or parents, or even child abuse, and even secondary trauma of child abuse. And it really kind of skews what a person might define as a healthy relationship-- emotional abuse.

A lot of our dads really want to be better. But that ideal of better and healthier is really kind of matched up against serious overwhelming trauma. We parent differently as fathers and as moms, but the child benefits from both perspectives. And this is how we can bring that value to our children. And so I think it's all about creating a healthy community and that healthy ecosystem for our children to grow and thrive in, where you hold up that support on both sides, without bringing biases, without bringing myths or previous unhealthy beliefs, in regard to gender and roles, and how that plays out, as it relates to what's best for our children.

I think the importance of starting All Moms Matter, it relates to a holistic approach to creating a safe environment for children. And when you provide this dynamic support for one side without holding that support up on the other side, you almost inadvertently create an environment that could be unhealthy. So when we were able to create All Moms Matter, and provide that support to moms-- and also, I think it goes back to a fundamental myth that, based on gender, moms should know everything there is to know about raising children.

RACHEL MILLER: Our vision is to empower all mothers in Merced Country.

LORRAINE NISHIHAMA: Basically, we're overwhelmed and worried-- can I do this-- when they come in. And then talking through the things that we talk about and them making the connections-- because it's all about them.

KIARA: Especially, like, teen moms, like myself. They be so young, they don't know how to take care of a child, and stuff like that. So that's where All Moms comes. And then they go there, and they learn all this stuff.

LORRAINE NISHIHAMA: Support group out there, as well, during school hours-- so one of their periods is kind devoted to this time for six weeks. So they get to sit and talk about those things.

RACHEL MILLER: We actually, recently, just had a nutrition workshop. And what we had is, we had somebody from the SNAP-Ed program come in. And what she did was, she did a presentation about how important nutrition is. And it really engaged the moms from the get-go, because it was very interactive. We actually cooked, and had them taste all the things that we gave them. We gave him a copy of the cookbook to take home with them, as well.

One of the more interesting things that all the moms really enjoyed was, she had these little vials full of sugar. And on the outside, it said, "gummy bear," or "cupcake," or "pudding cup." And it was the amount of sugar that was in something as simple as a pudding cup, or one gummy bear.

We talked about how you can change your shopping habits. Take your children shopping with you. Let them have a choice. Do you want bananas, or do you want an orange? Do you want broccoli, or do you want carrots? And giving them a say in the situation greatly increased their want to try that food.

LORRAINE NISHIHAMA: Just seeing those new moms come in, and feeling uplifted, and, like, I can do this-- like, empowered and ready to raise this child.

SPEAKER: Silvia, a 38-year-old Latina, and her husband have two daughters under the age of 10. Silvia has a college degree from Mexico. But the couple made a decision for Silvia to stay home to raise their children until they reached school age. This allows the parents to teach and model the values they believe are critical for their daughters to be successful in the world. Estee and her husband Cito have become extended family to Silvia and her family.

SILVIA: [SPEAKING SPANISH]

Great lives-- and study and prepare every day. Every day. Almost all the time we-- together-- with my husband and the two kids. He remembers, better than me, the prices, and, this is more expensive. Remember, last time? Oh, yeah, yeah. So I like to take him to the grocery store.

[SPEAKING SPANISH]

Maybe because we try to pick healthy food, sometimes they want-- no, this is not good for you. And they understand. I think that it's that they learn, a little bit.

SPEAKER: Silvia and Cito explore the importance of communication and family time in their worlds.

SILVIA: [SPEAKING SPANISH]

CITO: [SPEAKING SPANISH]

SILVIA: [SPEAKING SPANISH]

CITO: [SPEAKING SPANISH]

ESTEE: I think that one of the things that's really important in providing that support for young mothers, or learning how to maintain a good relationship, is really having mothers talk to each other-- having that safe zone to being able to share. Several women in our Zumba class that have recently been separated-- they're kind of distancing the whole responsibility-- not just the spouse part-- the family part. So it's kind of like a disconnect, completely.

Having that conversation with older couples that have had a successful relationship, and they're in their early 70s. And every time we have a get-together, her husband comes with all the tables and the table cloths, and sets up everything for the party, and he's there-- very supportive husband. And these are the types of things that younger couples need to see. Because this is what makes a team.

SPEAKER: A Zumba class participant and Estee discuss why the class is important.

ZUMBA CLASS PARTICIPANT: For me, it was like a therapy. I'm so happy that I get to go out and just go to do my Zumba.

ESTEE: I think for me, it's more about the relationship-building-- the fact that I have established so many friends just here in the classes, not only here-- in Visalia, in Dinuba. Everywhere that we go, we always touch somebody. And there's always a different story to share. And so for me, that's what impacted me the most.

And we've actually connected in a family way, as well. So we go to each other's parties. We're part of the family. I'm considered grandma. So it's really nice. It's really a nice feeling.

SILVIA: [SPEAKING SPANISH]

SPEAKER: Mimi is a 29-year-old Asian American woman, and the custodial parent of three children under the age of six. She is an active, engaged, and thoughtful parent, working to ensure the health of her children. It is important for Mimi that her children know and value their traditions, while being able to fully engage in their evolving culture.

MIMI: I was born in Thailand. I was born in one of the refugee camps. And I was two and a half years old when we came to the USA.

My oldest, she is seven. I know I live across town. And I wish school would just be right down the road, where I can take her to school.

I majored in Child's Development. I always try to be more fun around them. So I had her in May, and then I graduated in May-- at the end of May. And during that time, we also learned and studied about SIDS. And I was so scared. [LAUGHS] I was so scared. I had to wake up, like, every hour.

Before I was doing this, I was a medical interpreter for the hospital and the clinics.

SPEAKER: Mimi contrasts growing up traditionally, and what she sees as the loss of positive traditional values in the next generation.

MIMI: Well, I was raised in a traditional sense, where a girl or a woman, their job is in the home. And the boys, their job is outside of the home. As much as you can adapt to the American culture, you also have to remember your roots and your role. I value the traditions of being a traditional family and everything. But I also understand that we're evolving.

But then, never forget your roots. Never forget where you came from. Never forget your history, and your language, and the things you should appreciate.

The boys, nowadays, in this generation, they're not learning any of those traditions-- any of those old traditions. I come from a religious background, where my family practices shamanism. So when I married him, I converted to Christianity.

SPEAKER: One of Mimi's brothers died, which affected the whole family.

MIMI: I have four brothers and two younger sisters. I think, after his death, a lot has changed in my family. My parents went through a divorce and a lot of grief.

SPEAKER: Mimi talks about the challenges for her children being active outdoors.

MIMI: If you have a seven-year-old who's running out during lunchtime on a hot day, and there's no shade, and there's no healthy drinking water, that's not healthy. There isn't safe spaces. There isn't good, clean parks. And because of that, they're not as active as I was when I was in high school, where, I don't have a phone. I don't have a tablet. I just want to be on the go, go, go. I'm excited. And I want to do a lot of a hands-on thing.

I want to see my children to have the same values at school as I display them at home. I want to see them reflect the love and the playfulness and the happiness that I try to display at home. And although at home, I am being that child-- being that kid-- for my kids, they love that part about me. They are able to express themselves more. They're able to use imaginary play without people judging them all the time.

But for kids to learn, they have to understand that if they mess up, they shouldn't do this, or shouldn't do that next time, and how to avoid it. It is hard, but it's just a matter of having hope-- having faith. First and foremost, happiness-- I think when an individual is happy, it's healthy for them, mentally, and then physically healthy, where the kids the right nutrition-- get the right activities.

It just doesn't make any sense when traditional rules could be applied within a household. And my faith-- the word that we use yesterday-- resilient-- I think I was very much resilient.

I think what would really be useful is to have a community center where anyone who would want to learn more about nutritious groups can come and learn together-- can come and cook together-- a space that is being created for kids that would like to participate in more physical activity. Kids have the energy. They want to play. They're curious.

Provide the programs-- something for children and for youth, for them to be healthier. It's not so much of the food part. But it's more of, like, the activity-- the physical activity part. For you to be healthy, it first has to start with what you value. And those three things, to me, are always love and happiness and spiritual healthiness.

SPEAKER: Brian is a 27-year-old Caucasian man, and custodial father to Amber, a spirited five-year-old. Brian and Amber live in a four-generational household, even as they hope and plan for an independent life. Brian is a devoted father, using the challenges of his youth to shape his thoughtful vision for his daughter.

BRIAN: My mom, my stepdad me, and my sister ended up coming out here from Wisconsin in 2001. So we stayed with him for a few years. He ended up moving out. And I was down in Stockton for a few years in foster care.

It kind of grew me up, though. It kind of kicked me in the rear and was just like, hey, it's now or never. That's actually when I started doing good in school, got into sports.

We'll go to the park for awhile and do our thing instead of being a separated group. The fighting and the bickering and the stress-- she feels all of it. And it affects her. And I've seen how it affects her. Because me and her mom used to do it. And that's never what I really wanted to be.

What do you like to eat?

AMBER: Bananas.

BRIAN: [LAUGHTER] And string cheese.

SPEAKER: Brian's stepfather picks Amber up from school and cares for her in the afternoons and early evenings, while Brian works.

BRIAN: Yeah, it's put some stress on my stepdad, who usually watches her during the school year. He'll take her to school, pick her up, all that. And if I'm starting at 9:00, I'll be able to take her to school and drop her off on my way to work, and go to work. And then, he'll just pick her up and watch her for a couple hours, hopefully.

Communication between me and my stepdad has kind of fallen off, because of the school thing.

SPEAKER: Brian works long days, and often doesn't get home until 8:00.

BRIAN: I don't get to see her too much, now. I'm OK with that. Because the way I say it to myself is, I'm trying to get us out of there-- get our own place and all that.

SPEAKER: Brian is focused on understanding his daughter's needs, and guiding her carefully.

BRIAN: If she wants to play sports, she can play sports. If she wants to be the girly girl, OK. By being active with her-- finding out what she wants to do-- likes to do-- and being a part of that-- even if that means I get to be a kid for an hour or two.

Ultimately, trying to stay as calm and level headed as I can keeps her calm, and, for the most part, level-headed. It makes me feel good-- almost always an underlying issue-- and trying to figure out what the underlying issue is, and how we can fix or work through that underlying issue.

SPEAKER: Brian talks about the values he tries to instill in Amber, and his hopes for her.

BRIAN: Dedication, hard work, loyalty-- just building on them, and be a strong, independent woman. Being able to use her head, and being able to evaluate where she's at in the moment, things will affect her.

SPEAKER: Brian talks about what kinds of information and resources that young parents need in order to be prepared to raise their children well from the very beginning of life. He also discusses some of the needs that single fathers have in getting important information about parenting and resources.

BRIAN: Information-- it's hard when you're doing it by yourself and you don't have the support. So being able to find the resources-- granted, nowadays, there's Internet. If you don't have the money for internet, what are you supposed to do? Kids-- what they need, what they can and can't have, do. I said a lot of it has been a learning curve for me, just because I never knew where to find the information. Me and the mother are doing it by ourselves.

Just being able to know where to find the information, or the people that can help-- we fed Amber by bottle. And we never realized that when she fell asleep, the formula actually ate away at her teeth. Even when the child's born, if the hospital would say something. Or, here's some information-- I think that would be best. Hey, you're 16, 17, 18-- however old-- you're a first-time parent. Here's some information for you.

Where does a dad get his information if he doesn't have the support? Nutrition-- where to get it, how to get it, steps that he can take if, financially, he can't afford it, how to, if need be, sign up for WIC, how to find a good pediatrician. I think a class would be more pertinent than a handbook.

I kind of had a general idea even before I went into foster care the kind of father I wanted to be-- just somebody that will be there, encourage you, help you, protect you, whatever. The joy of seeing your kids face just light up-- as a parent, that's the greatest feeling-- the joy in her eyes that she shows, and knowing that I made it possible.

SPEAKER: Lucy is a vicious 37-year-old Latina living in Los Angeles with her youngest child. Lucy was a teenage mother who missed out on advanced education to marry and to care for her family. She is now divorced and living away from her home neighborhood in order to give her six-year-old son a safe and healthy place to grow up.

Lucy's mother is an important part of Lucy and her son's life. Lucy is focused, fierce, and deeply engaged in her son's health and development. She thoughtfully and gladly makes the needed sacrifices to ensure his healthy future.

LUCY: And since my mom put me in charge of the house because I was the oldest-- like, oh, you have to take care of your brothers. You have to cook for us. After you come from school, you have to go and pick up your brothers-- rushing myself to get out of that situation.

I had my girl when I was 18. I think if we educate the kids-- saying, OK, look, this is going to happen to you if you have a kid right now. Like I tell my girl, you are 17. You're going to turn 18 in a couple of months. If you have a baby, guess what? You're not going to go in to school no more. You're going to end up, maybe, like me or worse. It's your choice if you want to make your life stop over here, or if you want to continue, and go to school, and become a better person in this situation.

The neighborhood is getting better and better over the years-- maybe 10 years ago. It's a very nice neighborhood. Everybody wants to be there, and their kids to grow up in that kind of area. You're always looking for your kids to be safe so they can go to a nice school-- they have parks around. And this community has that.

So I would rather drive from my house to that place to get good food. I don't buy sodas. I don't drink sodas. And the food is getting too expensive.

I want him to be active. And I want him to grow up eating healthy-- not like me, not like the sisters, not like the father. But I was trying just to make good choices for me and my son. But because of the time, I only can have a good, good meal during the weekends.

The other day I paid for a grapefruit $1.00 dollar each. So I don't care about it. Or, like, oranges-- you will get five oranges for $4.00. Oh, yes, of course. The grapefruit-- I love everything that is citrusy. I just love it. I don't mind paying for that because it's food. It goes into my body. Yeah. Yeah.

I learned how to eat and how to cook healthy when I got pregnant. And I know it wasn't good because I gained like 40 pounds. They sent me to see the nutritionist. But for me, it wasn't choice of good or bad. It was a choice that I had to make changes in my life. Otherwise, I'm going to suffer the consequences-- but not only me, but my baby, too. Because I was pregnant.

But they have very good information. How do you cook for your kids? How can you serve them juice with no sugar? Or how many meals can you give them? And How many snacks can you give them? So I think that's a good program for the Hispanic people.

But I think we are shaping my mom, the way she's thinking, now. We shaping my mom. [LAUGHS] Just learning how to buy and how to shop-- not because it's cheap. That means it's a good product.

Just teach people how to cook in a different way while still eating good food. When you start talking to people about healthy habits-- how they can come up with eating right-- they think it's going to be too expensive. When we think "healthy," it's organic. It's going to be expensive.

We tell them, no, that you don't really have to buy organic. It will be good if you can afford that. But if you cannot, you can make different choices-- just the [INAUDIBLE] choices that you're going to make. [INAUDIBLE] OK. Sometimes, we have to make sacrifices.

It's your family. It's not someone else. It's your family. If you want them to grow up healthier, then we are growing up right now. If we involve the whole family in that situation, I think we can get to that point where we can start eating healthy, and not say, oh, because I'm going to eat this, I'm no longer Mexican.

But I think if our kids and daughters and grandkids would go in straight to grandma's and mom and say, for our own good, can you start cooking this way? ? We talked to my mom about this. And she's the one who's making the changes. Because she's the one who's cooking for us.

She makes those big changes for us and for her. And everybody's happy, and maybe not as healthy I would wish we could be, but we are getting there. If you want to eat healthy, I think you should take the people who's cooking for you to good grocery shopping, so they can make good choices.

I think education is very important. Because my son is going to a good school. Sometimes, we have to make sacrifices for our kids to get a good education. If we give our kids a very good education-- not only in our house, but outside of the house, in the school-- between school and parents, if we work together harder than we've been doing that, I think we'll have more kids that are going to college

Martin will see me reading, and I will be reading in that chair, and he will be here. And he would just grab a book and he would start reading. He knows that's good for us, to get a book and start reading, just for no reason. So he will remember these things, like, oh, my mom used to play with me. It's how you want to take care of your kids-- how you want your kids to grow up.

SPEAKER: The parents and families you have met are absolutely exceptional and inspiring. And yet, their common vision to nurture children to be stronger and healthier is shared by parents and families across California. These parents demonstrate that passion, commitment, and love are the foundation for health and well-being. And they all are raising up their children.

[MUSIC PLAYING]