



# ZENAIDA

## THE FIRST IN HER FAMILY TO HAVE A REAL CAREER

Zenaida was a stay-at-home mom. She and her husband built a tight-knit family, but with four children – an 18-year-old stepson, 13 and three-year-old sons, and baby girl, Zophie, 9 months – it was difficult to find childcare and fulfilling work outside the home for Zenaida.

Her husband, Antonio, was working two jobs to make ends meet. He wanted his wife to have her dream, too. But, how?

Zenaida's life was challenging. She had to grow up fast and learn English to help the whole family.

"My brother has autism and stopped talking. When he started therapy, I had to be the translator. As the oldest of four, I stayed home while [my parents] worked. It was hard to make a life."

She always wanted to be a nurse or work in the medical field. She says it's just ingrained in her to take care of other people.

"My life felt stuck before I became a pharmacy technician through Goodwill's Good Careers Academy. I wanted to go to school to help my husband not have two jobs. I was home, pregnant and lonely. I didn't know where to start. Our three-year old son, Roman, is special needs and with Zophie on the way, it felt like my dream was getting further and further away."

One day, Zenaida's son brought home a flier from United Way's Dual Generation Partnership. The very next morning she called the number.

**"I WANTED TO GO TO SCHOOL TO HELP  
MY HUSBAND NOT HAVE TWO JOBS.  
I WAS HOME, PREGNANT AND LONELY.  
I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO START."**





**“MY SON SAW ME STUDYING. HE WAS PAYING ATTENTION AND SAYS HE WANTS TO GO TO COLLEGE. JUST LIKE MY PARENTS, I WANT HIM TO BE MORE THAN WHAT I AM. IT’S A GENERATIONAL STEP FORWARD.”**

United Way’s Dual Generation Initiative, in partnership with Goodwill of San Antonio’s Good Careers Academy, believes that when children are surrounded by strong families and healthy communities, they can break the cycle of poverty, achieve greater stability and fulfill their potential. Its focus is creating hope by removing barriers and enabling families to achieve greater stability and success by creating solutions for finding education, childcare, employment and housing.

“They assisted with my son’s daycare so I could feel confident that he was in good hands. As a mom, I needed him to be well taken care of.”

With this shift in their lives, Zenaida could concentrate on her schooling to finally become a pharmacy technician.

The positive impact didn’t just affect Zenaida’s career, it is also inspiring her children to succeed.

“When I was going to school, my son saw me studying. He was paying attention and says he

wants to go to college. Just like my parents, I want him to be more than what I am. It’s a generational step forward.”

With the help of a United Way-funded partnership, Zenaida and her family are working hard. Poised for a bright future.

“I’m the first one in my family that has a real career! I love my job, helping my husband to pay our bills and be financially stable. I have a 401K!”

Currently renting their home, Zenaida and Antonio are building their credit and the next step is talking to a realtor to purchase a home.

“A career happened out of this for me. I went from being “frozen” to taking the first step. I didn’t have to settle.”

*To learn more about United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County’s work and to read more stories, visit [uwsatx.org](https://uwsatx.org).*