



GABBY AND JASON TRANSFORMATIVE KINDER-READINESS SUPPORT

“Family is everything,” Gabby says, looking at her two daughters. Her seven-year-old daughter, Luz, had to deal with the challenging transition to pre-K during the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

While enrolled in a pre-K program, Luz struggled with adjusting to school. “We had Luz in pre-kinder and it was a struggle,” Jason says. “She was very shy, timid and she didn’t want to do a lot of the activities,” he added.

Luz was trying to adapt to the changes of attending pre-K and her parents worried about how she would be prepared for kindergarten the following year. The pandemic only compounded this difficult transition period.

“Covid hit and we pulled her out of school,” Jason said. “Even though we were still teaching her at home, there was still that connection that she missed from the other little kids.” Gabby and Jason were concerned that their daughter would have these difficulties extend into kindergarten the following school year and sought out a kinder-readiness program to help Luz prepare for the next step of her education. Gabby and Jason wanted Luz to have a strong start to her early childhood education.



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That’s when Gabby and Jason enrolled Luz in United Way Ready Children Impact Area Partner, Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas’s Camp Metro program. Through Camp Metro, the Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas helps young girls make new friends, explore the world around them, develop self-esteem, learn real life skills and gain a sense of independence and community.

They say the program was transformative for Luz’s social, emotional and cognitive development right away. Everything about the camp, they say, Luz grasped immediately.

“Everyday I would get feedback from her like ‘I love it! I love going and I can’t wait to go back,’” Gabby says. “I was like, ‘okay, is this the same person?’”

Each day Luz would tell her parents what were her favorite parts of her day in the kinder-readiness program, like learning how to draw, playing with her friends and other activities.

Now 7 years old, Gabby and Jason successfully established a strong start to Luz's early childhood education and plan on enrolling their youngest daughter, Camila, in the program next year.

"Anyone that we come across, we pitch it to because we know the impact that it has made on our family and that is why we will be putting Camila in it this year," Jason says.



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Children who participate in early childhood programs like the ones that United Way Ready Children Impact Partners offer experience several long-term benefits of these programs. Research shows that early childhood programs like this lead to children being less likely to repeat a grade, more prepared academically for later grades, more likely to graduate high school and are often higher earners in the workforce.

United Way's Ready Children Impact Area helps families prepare their young children for school and life. Poverty, lack of access to prenatal care, quality child care and other issues can impair a family's ability to ensure that their children are curious learners progressing towards their full potential.

With the support of United Way and its Ready Children Impact Partners, Gabby and Jason's daughter Luz is thriving in her early education and is set up for greater success later in life.

"I treasure these times with my kids, I just want them to enjoy every moment of childhood," says Gabby. "United Way has opened doors for my daughters to be successful in their early education."

To learn more about United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County's work and to hear more stories, visit uwsatx.org.

