



TASHA

Every day for Tasha is another adventure. Her routine starts the night before when she packs her lunch, her son's lunch, prepares their clothes for the next day and sets her alarms. All so everything can go smoothly the next morning when her and her five-year-old son are out the door before 6:30 a.m.

Her daily routine is exactly how she wanted because she is able to focus on her education and career. After dropping her son off, who is "always excited" to be one of the first kids at his day care each day, she then heads to work or school. The delicate balancing act of work, college coursework and parenting is a challenge she happily takes on everyday due to the United Way Child Care Scholarship.

Powered by Women United, the United Way Child Care Scholarship provides free, subsidized child care to parents pursuing their college degree. They also receive mentoring and other forms of support, in addition to the high-quality early learning their children receive.

A single mother, Tasha couldn't have imagined returning to school years ago. She was struggling financially, working part-time jobs "I was struggling

with bills and basic needs," Tasha said. "I wanted to pursue a career and help people in the community but I didn't know how I was going to make it work."

Her biggest obstacle was the same roadblock many parents with young children face: the high-cost of child care. In Texas, the average cost of child care per year is \$10,706.

She was trapped in a never-ending cycle: She needed her son in child care during the day to attend classes or go to work but quality child care was too costly for her to work full-time.

"Enrolling in college, I was worried about where my son would be during my classes," she said. "How was I going to work? Who was going to watch him?"

While attending classes at San Antonio College, she received an email about the United Way Child Care Scholarship. That's when her life changed and a heavy burden was taken off her shoulders. Shortly after she applied for the scholarship she was notified that she had been selected and that her son's child care would now come at no cost to her because of the scholarship.

It didn't just save her money, it gave her peace of mind.



"There's really no word to describe the comfort it gives you," she said. "To know your son is okay while you're working eight-hour days and going to school – and not having the financial burden there anymore."

Her son is also excelling in his early education as he attends a high-quality daycare program where he received individualized support that have led to tremendous social, emotional and cognitive growth.

The mentorship and guidance she has received as a United Way Child Care Scholar have been invaluable for her as well. "I got a mentor who walked me through everything from A to Z," she said. "There wasn't a question they didn't answer." Her mentor helped her compare child care options and helped her figure out how to balance her work responsibilities and her class schedule. "Having some there who could guide me through the process made all the difference."



"When I first got the scholarship, my goal was just to become financially stable. But through United Way, my goals kept getting bigger."

Today, Tasha works as a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor, helping others recover from addiction. She completed her associate's degree in Human Services and continues to work toward her bachelor's degree with hopes of eventually obtaining her master's degree.

"If I didn't have United Way, I wouldn't have finished my associate degree," Tasha said. "I never would have even thought I was capable of attempting a master's degree."

With the support of United Way and Women United, her family has a stronger foundation for its future.

"My career would have stayed at minimum wage," Tasha said. "Now I'm able to provide for my family."

I no longer have to worry about living paycheck to paycheck."

"When I first got the scholarship, my goal was just to become financially stable," she said. "But through United Way, my goals kept getting bigger. I'm able to dream larger than I ever thought possible."

Now she is paying it forward to other parents in the community by serving on one of United Way's Parent Advisory Committees. She provides critical feedback to United Way to help better support families like hers.

"United Way lets parents be part of every decision," Tasha said. "It makes me want to help other people the same way that I was helped."

Now, Tasha sees the future that she once thought was out of reach. Financial stability and career growth are realities for her and she is making a difference not just for her family but for others in the community. Tasha is proof that investing in resources that uplift can have a positive impact that reaches farther than just one family.

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

