

25 YEARS OF SERVING SUMMIT COUNTY

FIRC Family & Intercultural
Resource Center



The Families of Summit County

Finding strength through struggles

The definition of resiliency is knowing how to cope in spite of setbacks, barriers, or limited resources. Resilience is a measure of how much you want something and how much you are willing, and able, to overcome obstacles to get it. Nancy's story of rising above setbacks in order to give her two boys a good life is not only inspiring, it's a reminder for us all that hope is always possible.

Nancy moved to Summit County when she was 10 years old and is a Summit High School graduate. She left the area to attend college and start a family, but after her second son was born, she realized she wanted to raise them in the mountains.

"I liked the small town feel of Summit, I have family here and I appreciate that it's a safe community to raise kids," said Nancy.

Nancy and her husband moved back to Summit in 2012. Nancy's youngest boy was struggling with his speech development and she was connected with FIRC's Families United home visitation program. Her parent educator was able to identify her son's needs and quickly got him into a speech therapist, helped Jayden get enrolled in preschool and offered Nancy parenting support. Her relationship with FIRC would become even more critical when suddenly, Nancy's world turned upside down.



Three years ago, Nancy's husband was arrested and has been incarcerated ever since. All of a sudden, she was a single-mom. Unbeknownst to Nancy, her husband hadn't paid their rent in three months, so she was also facing eviction in addition to trying to figure out how to pay for food and other basic needs.

"I didn't have a savings, I didn't know where we were going to live, it was a rough time," said Nancy. "Thankfully FIRC helped me find a place to live, helped me with food and connected me to support groups like Mamacitas, Grupo de Apoyo and therapy for my boys through Advocates for Victims of Assault."

FIRC realized the value of support groups back in mid-2000's when the Mamacitas group was started. The group meets every other month and is a way for Latina women to connect about issues affecting the community and being a parent. The group has taken on many topics including how to save money, child safety, and understanding domestic violence. It was the domestic violence topic that Nancy said gave her some healing from her marriage.

"I always grew up believing that domestic violence was only physical abuse from your husband, I never realized it was the way they talked to you or made you feel," said Nancy. "I didn't realize that my husband had been emotionally abusing me by calling me a bad mom and other things. Before when my husband or someone said something negative to me, it destroyed me, but now I have a new respect for myself."

Nancy said Grupo de Apoyo has been the other group that has allowed her to realize she is not alone as she tries to support her children's struggles and figure out life as a single mom. Grupo de Apoyo was started three years ago for Spanish-speaking parents and is facilitated by a therapist and FIRC's Parent Engagement program. The monthly held group provides support through difficult times for many of its members.

"When I went to Grupo de Apoyo I realized there were other people going through similar issues as myself," said Nancy. "No one is there judging you and it helped me talk through a lot of emotions and to let go of things."

After three years, Nancy continues to show amazing resilience. She works hard and has figured out ways to save money so she can remain living here. She hopes for a life where her boys can have a college education and have successful jobs.

"Summit County is expensive, but it's my home," said Nancy. "I spend over 50 percent of my income on rent, but I've found a way to save for emergencies and plan for lower paychecks during off-seasons. I am teaching my boys to be independent and understand how to live within our means. They usually can't have the toy they want or we can't order pizza because it's cheaper to cook at home but they understand it's more important for us to have a house to live in."



Nancy's job is important, but she makes spending time with her boys a priority.

"I grew up in a home where my mom worked every day," said Nancy. "I am choosing to take a different path from my mom. I prioritize days off in my work schedule so I can spend time with my boys. We go sledding, ride bikes or I volunteer in their classrooms. It's important for them to realize I value our time together and I can tell through their behavior it makes them happier. They make me want to be a better person."

Through FIRC's Nurturing Parenting workshop, Nancy also learned the importance of taking time for herself.

"From the classes, I realized that when I take care of myself I can take better care of my boys," said Nancy. "Now I make sure they go to bed at a consistent time so that I have an hour to knit or read. Being a parent is a full-time job, but just having an hour or two to myself makes a really big difference in how I respond to their needs."

Nancy believes in giving back, which is why she is now on FIRC's Parent Advisory Committee and why she enjoys helping others in Grupo de Apoyo the way that they helped her.

"It's important for me to help others," said Nancy. "I want to be an example for my boys that even when life isn't easy, it's still not all about you."

By becoming a single-mom Nancy has learned a lot about life and taking care of her family. She is stronger than she ever knew was possible.

"Life changes, but if you set your mind to get through hard times, you will," said Nancy.

