

Rooted in Central Texas

Our well-being is rooted in Education, Income and Health
When one area thrives, we all thrive.



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United Way Capital Area Stories
María
North Austin

María is not your typical teen parent. At 16, she gave birth to a baby boy. Shortly after, she began educating her peers about the realities of having a child early in life.

A CRITICAL TIME

María wishes she had learned earlier the challenges that result from risky behavior. "I would have waited to have a baby. I wouldn't be struggling as much in college. There is a lot you have to deal with when you have a baby at a young age and you're not ready."

Like many middle-school kids in underserved parts of Central Texas, María didn't have the opportunity to hear from a positive role model about making the right choices. That's why United Way Capital Area (UWCA) supports efforts such as Healthy Choices, a YouthLaunch program that is creating lasting impact for nearly 3,000 middle school students in 11 schools throughout Central Texas.

UWCA is focusing more and more on reaching the most at-risk, vulnerable children. Middle school is when kids develop habits for the future – so our efforts support programs that help prevent pregnancy, drug use, smoking and other risky behaviors. By utilizing María and others as mentors, teachers and leaders, YouthLaunch is able to effectively connect middle school kids with role models who understand what they are experiencing. Because of her involvement in the program, María now knows that she wants to pursue social work as a profession. "If I'm helping my community, then it's setting a good example for my son." With a renewed sense of life purpose and a network of support, María is refusing to become another dropout statistic.

SUCCESSFUL TOGETHER

María attends Austin Community College and plans on attending Texas State to major in Social Work. She also has hopes of getting a Master's degree. She is working hard to make a better life for herself and her son, while helping other teenagers understand how to make healthy decisions. "I think it makes a difference to give a hand to someone who needs it," says María. "If you help one person, you're making a difference."

In a few years María will have influenced hundreds of at-risk, middle school youth with her story, and they will be equipped to make better decisions about their own futures. She also will be a college graduate, able to live a better life and be a more positive influence on her son.

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United Way Capital Area recruits people and organizations with the passion, expertise and resources needed to tend to Central Texas' most pressing issues. When you give, advocate or volunteer, not only do you improve the quality of life for individuals and families, you help strengthen the community as a whole.

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