

Dreaming Big for Their Children

My name is Gizela Gaspar, and I am from Wapato, WA. I am a first-generation student at Heritage University pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Science for Nursing. I come from an agricultural background where my parents did not have the same opportunities as me. This has given me the strength to further my education so I can create a foundation for my family and myself.

When I was growing up, my family and I would leave our hometown for three months to pick cherries in Wenatchee, WA. I've experienced many summers in the fields working with apples, pears, and cherries. One of my most vivid memories is having to share a tent with no AC with twelve family members.

Throughout this time, one of the challenges I saw my parents face was low pay. Unable to afford an apartment, my family and I would stay in housing provided for migrant and seasonal workers at the entrance of Wenatchee. Also, my parents could not afford any type of child care, so I spent many of these summers alongside my parents in the fields.

Children in families that face similar situations may lack educational development, because some farmworker parents cannot guide their children's basic learning process. During my early childhood years, one of my biggest barriers was speech acquisition. Thankfully, my parents were able to enroll me in Head Start, which helped teach my parents better ways to interact with us and lend a helping hand to our educational development. Through this enrollment, I was offered speech therapy, which helped prepare me for kindergarten and become fluent in both Spanish and English at the age of six.

Many families still suffer constantly from low pay, and that still needs to change. But I believe what many farmworker parents truly want is a better future for their children – a future in which they can flourish and become who they want to be. Therefore, it is essential to create an environment in which their children are able to get both the care and basic education that they may not be able to get from their parents. That's why I'd suggest continuing to find funding for programs like Head Start and to promote those services to the farmworker families and community.

Because that is what farmworkers want: more than anything, farmworker parents want to ensure their children are safe and that they get every opportunity to advance their education.