

Happy Mother's Day!



Dear Friend,

Imagine you notice your child's eyes are red and infected. As a mother and a parent, you will do anything to nurse your sick child back to health.

You bring your child to the doctor. The doctor diagnoses your child with conjunctivitis and sends a prescription to the pharmacy. You pick up the prescription and bring it home, comforted that your child will soon have relief from the irritating infection.

You open the medication and read the insert and you realize something is not right. The insert clearly warns that this medication is not supposed to go near the eyes. How can that be? After reading further you realize this is a prescription for acne. Someone has made a mistake.

How would you feel? Frustrated? Angry? Scared?

This happened to Ana. She was lucky that she could read the English labels on the medication and caught the mistake before she applied the wrong medication to her son's eyes. Thanks to Waltham Family School Ana had the opportunity to learn English and prevent a medical disaster.

Meet Ana and her family

Let me introduce you to Ana. She is married to Ricardo and the mother of two sons, Ricardo (14 years) and Christian (12 years). Her sons are both in McDevitt Middle School in Waltham and enjoy playing soccer in their free time. Ana and her husband work hard with their own businesses. Ana wishes for her sons to go to college when they finish high school.



Ana's life was not always easy.

Ana came to the United States from Mexico when she was 16 years old. When she first arrived, she lived in California for a couple of years, where she could easily get by speaking only Spanish. Later she moved to Waltham to be closer to some of her siblings who lived here.

Living in Waltham was much more difficult for Ana and her family. Most people did not speak Spanish and Ana did not speak English. Ana felt uncomfortable going to the supermarket, as she worried people would ask her questions she would not understand or could not answer.

Waltham Family School Helps Mothers

Then she learned about Waltham Family School from her sister-in-law. Having an 8th grade education from Mexico, she was excited to get the opportunity to go back to school. Her family cheered her on and supported her choice to learn English. Ana was eager to learn English. She liked studying the meanings of words. Ana said, *"I learned a lot of grammar from my teacher. I liked to write. I would write page after page. I saved all my books, journal, and dictionary. They are so special to me."*

At Waltham Family School, she remembers that she learned about reading with her children, healthy living, how to read food labels, how to use computers, and she had health screenings and learned how to brush her children's teeth. "Waltham Family School teaches more than English. I learned a little about everything. And I learned to treat people with respect and be treated with respect," Ana noted.

Happy Mother's Day!



Ana was at Waltham Family School for 3 years, first with her oldest son, Ricardo in the WFS preschool and Christian in the infant toddler room. When Ricardo went to Kindergarten, Christian entered the WFS preschool and Ana moved from ESOL I to ESOL II. Her family was so proud of her progress, and she noted, "It was new to understand English and what people say. I couldn't believe I did it."

When Christian went to Kindergarten the family graduated from Waltham Family School. Ana now felt more confident, *"I could go to my sons' school without fear. Not worried that I couldn't understand what the teacher or principal would say to me."*

Waltham Family School Opens Doors

However, Ana was not done learning English. Ana realized that employers look at your education on job applications, so she enrolled in a pre-GED program and a year later, she got her GED – the first WFS graduate to earn her GED! *"[Waltham Family School] is an opportunity to do something with your life. I took the opportunity to better my life."*

At that time, Ana was asked by her son's teacher at Stanley Elementary School if she would help with Kindergarten screening. For two years Ana assisted as interpreter for Spanish-speaking families. She was excited to give back and help families with similar backgrounds, "that was me, now I'm helping families!"



Mayor McCarthy recognizes Ana as the first WFS Alumna to receive her GED in 2011.

Together We Succeed!

Ana's story is not unique. For over 13 years, Waltham Family School has worked to offer educational opportunities to more than 200 English Language Learner families. Waltham Family School empowers ELL families who want to improve their lives and prepare their preschool-aged children for school success, and strengthens the parents' skills necessary for parenting, workforce and community life.

Support Mothers and Their Families to Succeed in School!

The Friends of the Waltham Family School, Inc. (FWFS) works to fund Waltham Family School, and is supported by contributions from caring people like you. We need **your help to sustain and continue this excellent program** in the coming year. To make it easy to make your tax-deductible donation to FWFS, we have enclosed a return form or you can donate online at walthamfamilyschool.org.

On Mother's Day as we remember and give thanks for our mothers, please join in celebrating all the mothers—and fathers—of the Waltham Family School. Thank you!

Britta

Britta McNemar
Program Coordinator
Waltham Family School

PS. Save the date for the WFS Showcase on Thursday, June 2. The Showcase is a tradition each spring for the parents to use their developing English skills to share their experiences and successes with the community.