



Her day starts at 6am. The goal: to get four kids under the age of five clothed, fed and out the door by 7am. She drops the kids off at the Children's Achievement Center (CAC) at 7:30am with just enough time to get to school, which starts at 8am. Noon comes, school wraps and it's time to go to work. She gets off work about 5:30pm. The CAC closes at 6pm, so she makes it just in time to pick up the kids. Home by 6:30pm, get the kids fed, bathed and off to bed by 9pm. Now it's time to study and finally, go to bed at midnight. Then get up the next morning and start all over again.

But there's a goal in sight! Melinda is going to school to become a Pharmacy Technician.

"I'm not sure where I would be without the CAC," says Melinda. "As a single parent, knowing I can bring my children here and they are treated like family gives me peace of mind. I can focus on school and work during the day, so we can ultimately have a better life."

Melinda found the CAC by accident, while volunteering at United Way. When she expressed concern about her daughter and child care program she was enrolled in at that time, one of the United Way staff members told her to check out Easter Seals Blake Foundation's Children's Achievement Center downstairs. The Center Director informed Melinda that tuition assistance was available. She applied and qualified.

Martha, the oldest, was the first one to be enrolled at the CAC. Martha's behavior changed immediately and it was clear she was learning. Sent home each day with an activity report, Melinda could see what Martha was learning, what she was eating and the fun activities she was engaging in throughout the day.

Another child and a set of twins later, now all four of Melinda's kids attend the CAC. Two are enrolled in CAC's Head Start and the other two receive tuition assistance for childcare at the center.

"When the twins were born, Marcelino was diagnosed with mild/moderate hearing loss in one ear and moderate/severe hearing loss in the other ear. I was concerned about his ability to keep up with the other kids and how we would manage. The CAC has been wonderful. They offer guidance and resources, and they work with Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind to make sure that everyone is on the same page with his treatment plan so he can continue to make progress."

Melinda plans to graduate in March! She did a lot of research and specifically selected a program that will offer an externship with an employer that is looking to hire for that position.

"I'm excited for the future and I know that I wouldn't have been able to focus on school or working towards a career without the peace of mind knowing my children are in good hands and well taken care of at the Children's Achievement Center!"