

Participant Stories

Leatrice and Giovanna: Building Lifelong Healthy Habits for both Mom and Child

Leatrice and Giovanna are both mothers who learned about the Vouchers 4 Veggies (V4V) program through their participation in WIC. Before joining V4V, eating healthy was difficult because of the high cost of fresh fruits and vegetables. For Giovanna, the extra support from V4V vouchers goes a long way. She no longer has to pay out of pocket for fresh produce and feels like she can now afford to purchase everything else she needs. For Leatrice, she has more opportunities to make healthy choices and no longer has to resort to purchasing foods such as chips or hamburgers, just because they cost less. **“Before I had the vouchers, it wasn’t an option to just go and buy a bag of apples... it was easier to go get a hamburger that costs \$1 than to spend \$5 on some fruit. Now I have a choice. I can make a whole meal with just the vegetables without getting a hamburger.”**

V4V has also created opportunities for Leatrice and Giovanna to try new fruits and vegetables. Leatrice has developed a love for dragon fruit and starfruit, both fruits that she would have never purchased if she was not enrolled in V4V. Giovanna has been able to purchase and eat more vegetables like okra and brussels sprouts.

With the V4V program, both moms not only improved their diets during pregnancy but also maintained and promoted healthy eating habits for their kids. The program has had a big impact on what kind of food Giovanna feeds her daughter: **“I was able to find out what fruits she likes and keep getting them... Now that she’s in preschool, I’m able to put strawberries and other fruits she likes [in her lunch] and limit the junk.”** For Leatrice, V4V has allowed her to be more creative with making snacks for her 5-year-old: **“You can make cute little things with the vegetables, so I made ants on a log for my son, and he really liked that.”**

Participating in V4V has also introduced complete lifestyle changes for both moms. Giovanna has been building a healthy eating routine that includes drinking more water, eating at least a cup of fruit each day, and eating more vegetables for dinner. **“When you start a habit, if you keep up with it, then it’s easier to stick to that diet... so that’s what I’m trying to do. [The vouchers] help me stick to these healthy eating habits.”** Leatrice is more mindful of what she puts in her body now because what she has noticed that what she eats affects the way she feels. She drinks more water because she is able to buy berries with her vouchers and add them to her water. In addition, she now has more knowledge about budgeting for fruits and vegetables. **“I know what to spend now, and I know how to make a budget with what I have. When the vouchers end, I can still keep up with that budget.”** Leatrice has also been able to try out more vegetable-centered recipes now that she receives V4V vouchers. **“Me joining the program opens up a whole world of things I’ve never thought about before so this is why I’m so happy I joined.”**

Leatrice and Giovanna’s stories demonstrate V4V’s positive impact on pregnant peoples’ access to fruits and vegetables and their ability to build lifelong healthy eating habits for themselves and their children.

