

Parents learn how to nurture at group-based Contra Costa program

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Araceli and Miguel Oregel, of Brentwood, watch their 1-year-old daughter Kimberly during dinner held before the start of the Nurturing Parenting Education program at the Delta First 5 Center in Brentwood on Dec. 2, 2014. (Doug Duran/Bay Area News Group)

BRENTWOOD -- Parents Araceli and Miguel Oregel know from firsthand experience that caring for a baby and a toddler can be a handful.

The young mother would sometimes become so frustrated that she would yell at her daughters, Nayeli, 3, and Kimberly, 1. But Araceli Oregel recently learned through a local parenting program how to remain calm during those stressful moments.

"I'm the kind of person that screams a lot, but here they teach us how to be patient and how to not scream," the mother said. "I'm still working on it. I'm not perfect, yet, but they give good tips here for us to calm down before we react and scream around the kids."



Julie Rodriguez, of Brentwood, has her toddler son Julian walk to her during a Nurturing Parenting Education program class break held at the Delta First 5 Center in Brentwood on Dec. 2, 2014. (Doug Duran/Bay Area News Group)

Before losing her temper and yelling, she now takes a deep breath, counts from one to 10, relaxes and changes the subject that's causing any anger. She's becoming a more patient mother and realizing that she's not alone in facing the challenges of raising children.

The working mother thanks a group-based program for helping her and Miguel Oregel grow as parents as they work as a team to raise their daughters.

The Brentwood residents enrolled themselves in the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Contra Costa County's Nurturing Parenting Program to improve their parenting skills, Araceli Oregel said.

"Every Tuesday here, I've been able to improve myself as a father," Miguel Oregel said.

The Child Abuse Prevention Council of Contra Costa County

The Oregels are two out of 14 parents who have met every Tuesday night for the past 22 weeks to learn how to be better mothers and fathers at the free program, held at Delta First 5 Center in Brentwood.

"It's a good program for everybody to take because sometimes you think you're the only one with those problems, when actually everyone goes through the same thing," Araceli Oregel said.

The program is designed to reduce the risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect, Executive Director Carol Carrillo said. Parents voluntarily enroll in the parenting-education class, which is taught in Spanish.

"Basically, the great thing about the program is it teaches parents how to take care of themselves, as well as the children," Carrillo said.

The council provides the Nurturing Parenting Program at three other centers in the county: Shelter Inc. in Martinez, First 5 Center West County in San Pablo and First 5 Center in Concord. The agency is one of three dozen nonprofits to benefit from the Share the Spirit holiday fundraiser sponsored by Bay Area News Group.

Program director Maggie Velasco said the program is based on five concepts: appropriate expectations, developing empathy, positive nonviolent discipline, developing self-awareness of appropriate family roles and personal power through self-care.

The parents and their children begin the class by gathering in a circle for a sing-a-long and announcements. A free dinner is served before class, then the parents go to the round-table classroom setting to discuss the weekly concept while children are watched by child care providers.

Parents and children learn from a similar curriculum so they can practice the newly acquired skills at home, Velasco said.

"We provide structured child care so the children can review age-appropriate information that their parents are also covering," she said.



Kimberly Oregel, 1, of Brentwood, is held by her mother Araceli Oregel during the Nurturing Parenting Education program held at the Delta First 5 Center in Brentwood on Dec. 2, 2014. (Doug Duran/Bay Area News Group)

All of the child care providers have gone through the program themselves, which allows them to effectively implement nurturing techniques with the children, she said.

Marcela Lopez, who took the class in spring 2008 and became a staff member later that year, said she decided to become a provider because the curriculum taught her how to thrive as a nurturing parent.

She said she loves seeing the parents' progression throughout the lengthy course.

"It's impressive to see families' growth because when they first come, they say, 'Six months is a lot -- I don't want it,'" Lopez said.

Upon graduation day, each parent with at least 80 percent attendance receives a \$100 Target gift card from the council and a \$100 grocery gift card from Share the Spirit.

Araceli Oregel said she plans to keep in touch with new friends acquired through the program. The Oregels befriended fellow Brentwood residents Julie and Eddie Rodriguez, whose children, Eddie, 3, and Julian, 1, get along happily with theirs. The Rodriguezes and the Oregels already meet for child playdates throughout the week.

Miguel Oregel hopes more parents will consider enrolling in the free program to better understand what it means to be a dad or a mom.

"A lot of people think they're good parents," he said, "but I think you never stop learning how to be a parent."

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The Child Abuse Prevention Council of Contra Costa County

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Nurturing parenting program

Call Maggie Valasco and 925-755-4200 or go to www.capc-coco.org to learn more about the Nurturing Parenting Program or the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Contra Costa County.