

# MOM YODELIS

## From the very beginning, Yodelis had high expectations for Nathan – and herself.

She was 16 when she got pregnant and she admits she was embarrassed and confused. “I wasn’t sure what I was going to do and whether to go through with it,” Yodelis said. “It’s a big decision that you have to make at a fast pace.”

She was living with her mom at the time and was the youngest in the family. “I was feeling scared,” she said. “I had no idea how to be a mom.”

A provider at the Exodus Women’s Center near her home suggested she contact Nurse-Family Partnership® through REACHUP, Inc and the Healthy Start Coalition of Hillsborough County, Fla. She hit it off immediately with her nurse, Andrea.

“She was the one person in my life I could express everything to with no judgment,” Yodelis said.

Yodelis took on what she had to do with grit and determination, realizing from the start that although their parents were supportive, she and her boyfriend would be responsible for their child.



NFP nurse Andrea (right) helped support Yodelis (left) to learn how to care for her son Nathan (middle), while working two jobs and going to school.

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She relied on nurse Andrea for information on how to handle her pregnancy, what to expect in childbirth and how to care for little Nathan when he arrived.

“She said, ‘Just keep calm. Everything is going to be ok,’ ” Yodelis recalled. “I felt so tired sometimes and she told me to just sit in the shower when I was feeling overwhelmed. She told me exactly what to do. It was great.”

Yodelis was working two part-time jobs and going to school. Sometimes, when Andrea would arrive for a home visit, she would hand Nathan to her just so she could eat.

“Andrea became such a good friend,” she said. “She was someone I could call about anything.”

Yodelis left Puerto Rico when she was 9 and her family is bilingual, so it was important for her to teach Nathan both Spanish and English as he learned to talk. Nurse Andrea brought activities for Yodelis to use to teach Nathan and now he chatters confidently in both languages.

“We used to live in an apartment on the third floor,” Yodelis said, “so every day we would count the 10 stairs of the first floor in English, the second floor in Spanish, so he learned to count in both languages right away. He learned his colors in both languages. Andrea told me this is the perfect age to learn both languages, and she was right.”

Yodelis worked hard to complete high school while working and caring for Nathan and managed to earn her diploma a year ahead of her class. Now, she is attending Hillsborough Community College. She is preparing to be a paralegal and ultimately would like to become a criminal lawyer.

She works nights and Nathan stays with his father. Then, she studies during the day while Nathan is in day care and catches sleep when she can.

“At the beginning, it was very hard,” Yodelis said, “but at some point, I realized that two years had gone by and I had learned to live with it. I also realized that the happiest moments of my life are with him.”

A favorite part of the day for both of them is when Yodelis reads to Nathan each evening and, instead of hanging with her teenaged friends on weekends, she and Nathan spend their time at the zoo or Busch Gardens, two of their favorite places.

“Nathan is growing up,” she said. “He’s very happy and energetic. He runs around and plays a lot and keeps learning new things.”

Without nurse Andrea, Yodelis said she would be “a total mess. I don’t want to imagine what life would have been like without her. She was very important to me.”



Yodelis shared that Nathan (shown here) likes to play and learn new things.



Yodelis (right) teaches her son, Nathan (left), Spanish and English. Nurse Andrea says it’s the perfect time for him to learn.

One anecdote reveals just how strong their bond was.

On Thanksgiving in 2018, Yodelis shaved her head. She was undergoing treatment for a thyroid condition and it caused her to lose a lot of her hair, gain weight and struggle with fatigue.

“I remember when I showed nurse Andrea,” she said. “She said I looked amazing and I was rocking it.”

“Nathan just rubbed my head, said, ‘Mommy bold’ and started to laugh, and the laughter made it all OK.”

Yodelis and Nathan graduated from Nurse-Family Partnership in October when Nathan turned 2 and they still miss Andrea’s visits. “We became so close. She supported us in all our decisions.”

Yodelis is working hard to complete her degree and has high aspirations. “I love school,” she said. “It’s very important to me.”

Most important, though, is that they continue to become a strong, resilient, happy family.

“I’m hoping for him to just grow up to be a good man,” Yodelis said. “That’s what’s really important.”