



Ensuring a Great Start
The Paula Polo Story
YMCA Connection - April 2010

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According to the [National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies](#) (NACCRRA), there are **over 11 million children under the age of 5 throughout the United States who need care and schooling while their parents are at work.** NACCRRA also indicates **research on the brain shows the first years of life are crucial for intellectual, social and overall development with 80 percent of the brain developing by age 3.**



Paula Polo (left) and husband Enzo Alzerreca (right) with children Montserrat (left) and Felipe (right) at the Homestead Family YMCA Preschool.

At the YMCA, preschool is so much more than just a daycare center. It is a place to grow. A place where a child's social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical development are continually nourished and enriched through a caring, knowledgeable staff and the implementation of the [Creative Curriculum](#). [YMCA Preschool](#) is a place where a young mind can make great leaps and a child's self-esteem can soar.

For Paula Polo, mother of Montserrat Alzerreca, 6, and Felipe Alzerreca, 2, the Homestead Family YMCA Preschool has been a true blessing. Montserrat attended the preschool program from 2007 until last year when she aged out of the program. Little Felipe recently began his journey through the program in August of 2009.

"For me, YMCA Preschool is the best preschool program out there," said Paula. "The teachers are so well prepared and so well suited to take good care of the children. During her first week at the program, my daughter Montserrat did not want to leave the facility to come home,



We build strong kids,
strong families and
strong communities.

and that really caught my attention."

According to Paula, the classrooms at the Homestead Family YMCA preschool are filled with educational toys, a friendly atmosphere and staff members that are always willing to help no matter what the circumstance. The staff is deeply concerned with the individual development of every child in the program, she adds. "They are people who know how to listen," she said.

"I think the program has really helped my children learn how to socialize with other kids early on," said Paula. "My daughter also came out of the program very well prepared in reading and writing, and has already been on the Honor Roll several times since beginning elementary school."

The United States is very different from other countries (Paula is from Colombia, and her husband Enzo from Chile) where it is more customary to have children playing outside with neighbors and friends, she explains. **The educational system in the United States is also very different, Paula said, and the staff at the Homestead Family YMCA has proved tremendously helpful in guiding her on Montserrat and Felipe's educational paths.**

"I have had a wonderful experience with the Homestead Family YMCA, and have already recommended it to some of the parents at my daughter's school who also have preschool-age children," said Paula. "Other moms have also been very impressed."

Not all children are fortunate enough to have the means to pay for a quality preschool program. That is why we offer financial assistance to families in need. With your help, we can ensure that more children are able to reap the early developmental benefits of our program.

Please give to the Strong Kid's Campaign which provides scholarships so that no child is ever turned away for inability to pay.

[Donate Now](#). Every dollar counts!

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Note: Interview with Paula Polo was translated from Spanish to English.

YMCA of Greater Miami Mission: to put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

YMCA of Greater Miami Vision: to grow to serve 1 in 10 people in Miami-Dade.

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