

Jamilia Ashworth
Champion for Change

I have joined the *Network for a Healthy California – Bay Area Region* as a Champion for Change for Better Health. My interest in being a Champion for Change really started when some of my family members passed away from diabetes and heart disease. I figured the Champions for Change program could help me and my family to better our health. With all that is going on in my community with diabetes, obesity and things like that, and also since my children are getting older, I thought it was time for a change for health.

One of the biggest changes that I have made in my life is actually making time for health in my busy schedule. Before, I used to make all kinds of excuses why I could not take the time to eat healthy or exercise. Now I fit health into my schedule. I now make time for health because I know how important it is for me and my family. Change does not happen overnight, it is a process. However, the smallest changes you make with your habits can make a big difference in your life. A key motivator for me and a motto that I live by is – be ambitious enough to see your child grow old. I want to be there to see my children grow old and be successful. If I do not make a change for myself and my children now chances are that I will not see them grow old and they may not have the opportunity to grow old and be successful due to health problems like diabetes and obesity.

To me, being a Champion for Change means a better way for my children. It means the opportunity to actually help others to be better for their children and themselves. It motivates me to do more for the health of my community. I am a Champion for Change because I feel change is needed. If we want society and our community to continue on, a change has to be made.

As a Champion for Change I have learned why fast foods and many processed foods that have lots of sugar, salt and fat are bad for your health, and why it is important to eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables. Due to both the convenience and relatively low-cost of fast foods, we had been eating fast foods. But since I have learned how bad these foods can be for the health of my children, I have made the change to stop buying fast foods for my family.

Since I am a low-income person, like other members of my community, the relatively high cost of fresh fruits and vegetables makes buying fresh fruits and vegetables a problem. However, programs like the Food Stamp Program and the School Breakfast and School Lunch Programs have been a big help, enabling my family to eat more fruits and vegetables. Regarding these programs, my motto is – I love everything that is free and is good for you. I love free stuff. If I can get this right here, for free and it is good for my body and for my children, I am going forward with it. When a good thing like Food Stamps and the School Breakfast and School Lunch programs are available to you, you really need to take advantage of these resources for the health of your family. People don't always have the opportunity to take advantage of a good thing, so when it comes along grab it, go for it because it might open another door to something else. Some people might not know how to access these resources or it may be that they think it takes too much effort or that you have to give out too much information. However, for the health of your children and your family, I encourage people to take advantage of these programs.

Through my faith I know that I do not need to worry because God has got my back. God will always provide opportunities for us. A quote that I live by is – too blessed to be stressed, God will take care of it. To me this is so true, God will always take care of me.

If you would like to become a Champion for Change, please email me at championsforchange@barnn.org, or for more information on the Champions for Change program, please visit www.barnn.org.