

## **BRIGHTER BEGINNINGS AND VOCATIONALIZING**

Brighter Beginnings' mission is to support healthy births and the successful development of children by partnering with parents, strengthening families, and helping to build strong communities. We currently offer services out of four core program areas: Family Healthcare, Early Childhood Development, Teen Family Support, and Community Strengthening. Brighter Beginnings has incorporated vocationalizing into each of our programs to address the many interwoven stresses that our families face. We spoke with Angie Ayala to learn how she uses vocationalizing with her clients.

### *Holding a place of hope*

Angie Ayala, Program Supervisor of our Hello Baby program, knows firsthand that vocationalizing doesn't happen overnight. For her client Chelsea, who recently launched her own photography business, it's been three years in the making. When Chelsea first sought out Brighter Beginnings she was a pregnant mother working as an in-home caretaker. She knew she had an eye for art, and when her daughter was born she found herself obsessed with taking photos of her newborn adorned in bows and tutus. She posted her photos to Facebook and received an overwhelming amount of encouragement from friends and family. Angie told her about community resources like photography classes that might help her grow her talent, and encouraged her to continue to use social media to build her brand. Angie says that nearly all of our clients are plugged into social media and many use their platforms to build their businesses and engage audiences by posting video tutorials on YouTube or photos on Facebook. At their last check in, Chelsea mentioned that she was hosting a beach photo session for another mother for the birthday of her three year old.

Though Angie is often tasked with helping her clients navigate the day-to-day pressures of their lives and ensuring that they're able to find work that fits into their lives now, she is also passionate about encouraging her clients to dream. "We have to meet our parents where they are... but we also help our clients hold that place of hope and keep that glow and passion of 'I might be good at something more than what I'm doing.'" Angie emphasizes preserving this hope for future generations, and working with parents to embody the ambition and openness to possibility that they want their children to inherit.

### *Breaking the mold*

Jobs and careers are an important piece of our identity. How we obtain employment, our work environment, compensation, and the ways in which we contribute are fundamental to how we see ourselves and the world. Oftentimes a family's history of working certain jobs promotes certain identities that limit the ways individuals see themselves contributing. It can be difficult for clients to pursue choices that weren't available to previous generations of their families, but our case workers encourage clients to confront expectations that limit them. By integrating vocationalizing into our services, we help clients work towards self-sufficiency while holding a place of hope for them as they build the future they want for themselves and their children.