

Growing up and out of San Mateo County



Hi, Get Healthy SMC partners!

Many of you know me as the friendly face checking you in at our events, answering any questions during the RFP process, and supporting you so you can continue the great work you do to create healthy, equitable communities. I've been working with Get Healthy SMC for over six years and have seen the power of our partnerships – recognizing we can all achieve more and be more effective than working alone.

Since I started with Get Healthy SMC, I've seen San Mateo County grow and change in many ways. I find myself getting nostalgic at times, thinking back to what it was like growing up in the county. Looking back at my childhood in San Bruno, I see that I had many opportunities to be healthy because the healthy choice was the easy choice. I was lucky to live in a neighborhood that made it easy for me walk and take the bus everywhere – an objective of Get Healthy SMC's Healthy Neighborhoods priority. I fondly remember walking to my elementary and middle schools every day. My home was also walking distance to a couple of the parks where I could enjoy a breath of fresh air. We were also close to many of my friend's homes so it was easy to walk between our houses and stay connected.

Even in high school, I still didn't need a car to get around and was able to take the bus to my high school. I remember rushing out of the house on many mornings to make the 10 minute walk to El Camino Real and catch the SamTrans Bus to get to school or my part-time job at the mall.

However along my daily these walks to school there were only two stores on my route, a liquor store and a fast food restaurant. Knowing what I know now about how health begins where we live, learn, work, and play – I see how not having healthy food options close by made it difficult to make the healthy choice the easy choice. I remember making the occasional pit stop at the local liquor store Speedy Spot for candy and other unhealthy snacks that were prominently featured at the front of the store. If I was thirsty on my walk, I would have to sift through the sugary drinks to buy a more healthy option.

It was when I enrolled in Skyline Junior College that it became harder to use public transit and juggle the bus schedule with my school and work schedules. I ended up putting school on hold so I could work and save up enough money to buy myself a car. It seemed easier to just get in the car and get myself to my destination. However, I joined many others in traffic each morning as I starting working outside of San Bruno. I wanted to find a job closer to home, but there just weren't a lot of local job opportunities and housing costs started rising. I finally moved out of San Bruno in mid-2011 to be closer to where my soon-to-be husband and I worked and I'm now part of the 81% of workers in San Mateo County who drive into the county for work.

Even though I don't currently live here, my roots are still in San Mateo County. I'm proud to work with Get Healthy SMC and our partners to help make it easier for people like me to live in healthy communities in San Mateo County. Our key priorities to advance healthy, equitable communities through healthy housing, neighborhoods, schools and the economy will help ensure everyone can have the opportunity to live a long, healthy, and happy life here.

With only about 40,000 residents, most of us who grew up in San Bruno always carry a deep sense of pride and love for the small, tight-knit community. Every time I return to visit family and friends, I fondly remember the growing up here and the strong sense of community we shared. I cannot help but hope that one day my family and I can live there once again so my husband and daughter can see what the big fuss is all about.

Rosa Torpis, Program Coordinator

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