



Cherokee & Nick's Story

Cherokee Atkins can quickly list what she wants for her 2-year-old daughter: She wants her to grow up in a stable home. She wants her to feel financially secure. She wants her to have the opportunity to go to college.

This is important to Cherokee because these are three things she didn't always have growing up. But things will be different for her daughter Arorah, Cherokee explains, in part because of Promise 1000. This United Way home visitation initiative connects the region's most vulnerable parents to supports in the beginning years of a child's life –the first 1,000 days of life.

Cherokee Atkins and Nick Brown are trying to do what is best for their daughter, but there are big obstacles. The couple has chosen jobs that allow one parent to be home at all times, although they don't make a lot of money – Nick works in maintenance and Cherokee is a barista. When they found out about Promise 1000 they knew it was something they wanted for themselves and for Arorah.

“There is no such thing as a perfect parent but there is such a thing as a better parent,” Cherokee says. “I want to be there for her. I don't want to miss a thing.”

As parents, Nick and Cherokee were pretty much on their own. They have no role models to turn to for advice or guidance either among their family or friends. And they especially appreciate the fact that this program is based on home visitation. “It happens on our time and in our house,” Cherokee explains, adding that available transportation can be a huge issue in getting resources if you're struggling financially.

Arorah adores the home visits because it often means she gets a new toy – which is a key for her parents to see how Arorah is developing, Nick says. And there is a lot of help in teaching Arorah new skills.

Nick says the home visitations can extend into areas of the family that might not seem directly related to parenting – such as job stresses. However, he adds, solving issues actually helps him be a better parent. Thanks to Promise 1000, “we are stronger as a family and we just do better,” Nick says.