

# STRENGTH

in

## weakness

Deportation,  
dropping out and  
even single-parenting  
couldn't keep  
Yasmin Galvan from  
achieving her goals

If there's one thing Yasmin Galvan (Health Professions '17) knows, it's the importance of perseverance in the face of hardships. You can say this naturalized citizen, nontraditional student and single mom of three children — one with special needs — has had plenty of experience in navigating obstacles.

At age 9, Galvan's life was permanently altered. Born in Mexico, Galvan and her family moved to Arizona when she was 2 years old, ending up in Midland shortly after. While her father had obtained citizenship, Galvan, her mother and older sister were still waiting on their citizenship paperwork to be finalized. In the meantime, their visas expired leading to deportation.

"It was brutal," she recalled. "We were separated from my dad, so that was something totally new to me. We already had a home, so he stayed in Midland to take care of it and to work. He was only able to



By Glenys Young  
Photos by Neal Hinkle

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come see us every other weekend because of the money and everything, but he would send money home to us.

“My mom was forced to take on a role she wasn’t used to as far as managing money, so there were times she would mismanage the money, and we didn’t have a lot of help over there.”

The economic hardships were compacted with the fact that young Galvan had grown up speaking primarily English. Making the best of a tough situation, she learned to speak, read and write in Spanish.

“It was a good, bad experience,” she said. “It ended up benefitting me in the long run. I learned perseverance in focusing on my education. That’s all I had and focusing on it was my way of stabilizing things — that’s what I could control. I kept putting forth the effort; it kept me busy and kept me going.”

## Coming Back to America

After nine months, her family was able to return to the U.S. legally as permanent residents, but things had changed. She had changed.

“I kept to myself after that,” Galvan said. “I didn’t get involved in any school activities or anything like that. I didn’t feel like I fit in anymore. It definitely gave me a different perspective. Even now, I feel a little bit like an outsider. I’m not an American-born citizen, so I’m different.”

The outcast feeling led to Galvan avoiding school — eventually dropping out by her junior year. However, after watching her classmates graduate, she realized she needed to do something with her life.

“My dad always instilled good work ethic in us,” she said. “We came here for a reason — the ‘American dream.’”

## Balancing School and Family

At 21, Galvan became pregnant with her first child, Ariana, and decided enough was enough.

“It made me think about what kind of future I was going to give my daughter,” she added. “I was living with my parents; I didn’t have my own things. I just needed to do something with myself. I realized my situation was going to be an important factor in obtaining citizenship and giving a better life to my child.”

Galvan earned her GED and enrolled as a student at Midland College. However, she dropped out again while pregnant with her second child, Sylvester. Her third child, Versciase, was born a year later. She spent five years just focusing on her children — and for good reason.

Sylvester, who was meeting expected growth milestones at 18 months old, had stopped talking by age 2. Galvan took her son to the pediatrician, who didn’t have good news.

“They believed he had autism,” she said. “It was just a formality after that — making sure his diagnosis was correct and getting him help. We had a speech-language pathologist and occupational therapist from Early Childhood Intervention visiting us at home and working with him.”

As her children aged, Galvan decided to refocus on her education. She re-enrolled in Midland College — working there as a telephone operator and part-time admissions clerk — and earned a certificate and her associate’s degree. When thinking about her bachelor’s degree, Galvan remembered the speech-language pathologist who worked with her son. It inspired her to transfer to TTUHSC, where she graduated with a health care administration degree and is now working toward enrolling in the master’s program for speech-language pathology.

It hasn’t been easy going to school, working and raising three children.

“It has taken a lot of perseverance,” she said. “There were definitely times I wanted to give up, but my son having all the issues he did, kept me going — knowing if I failed, it was going to affect my children.”

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### Making Time to **Serve Others**

While pursuing speech-language pathology, Galvan works as a financial aid advisor at Midland College, helping students navigate the federal financial aid system. In her spare time, she became a registered tax preparer to further assist people in her community.

Considering her mother's financial management troubles, it seems Galvan has come full circle.

"It's extremely important," she said. "I know how it can affect you if you don't have your finances in order, and I also know the cost of an education. That's going up, and so is our student loan debt, which is something I definitely want my students to know about. They have to be smart.

"I wish I had had financial guidance when I started going to school. I could have maximized my aid had I just followed a direct path and known what I wanted to do before I started. I do have student loan debt, and that's a reality I have to deal with."

That said, she doesn't regret her life choices because they made her stronger.

"I think I went down a crazy path," she admits. "I wish I would have stayed more focused; but, then again, our difficult experiences make us who we are, so maybe I wouldn't be who I am today if I had taken different advice at the time." 

