



# HomeStory

Stories from the California Home Visiting Program

## Stephanie's Story: New Mom Publishes Anti-Bullying Children's Book

**S**tephanie, in a soft English accent, sweetly reads to her son about a fish named Amelia that was bullied. At just 2 years old, the toddler is too young to know that his mother authored and illustrated the book, and that it is based on her own experiences.

"I was bullied when I was a teenager," the first-time mother says, recalling those difficult years. Much like the heroine in her book, she's processed the pain and moved on. "You see this journey of how Amelia reacts and how she makes some changes in her life."

Although Stephanie started her story, "Amelia the Fish," when she moved to the U.S. a few years ago, the project was put on hold as she acclimated to her new marriage and life here. The young couple was thrilled with news of Stephanie's pregnancy in 2014, but had many questions. When they learned of Shasta County's voluntary home visiting program, Stephanie eagerly enrolled.

### What is Home Visiting?

*Home visiting is a voluntary program that pairs pregnant and newly parenting women with a nurse or trained professional who makes regular visits in the participant's home to provide guidance, coaching and access to prenatal care and other health and social services. Home visiting is preventive intervention focused on promoting positive parenting and child development, with the ultimate goal of strengthening families and communities.*



"My family is in England, and my husband's family is more than four hours away. Knowing I was going to have my first child without any family help around made the home visiting program appealing to me," Stephanie says. "I had this amazing responsibility of looking after a human being and would be learning on the job; that was scary."

Shasta County, one of 24 California Home Visiting Program sites, follows the Nurse-Family Partnership model, and Stephanie loved how a nurse would come into her home on a regular basis throughout her pregnancy and the child's first two years.

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“I quite liked that,” she says, adding how it was even more appealing after she had the baby. “In those early days, I was trying to figure out what does my day look like ... so having her come to my home was really helpful.”

Stephanie credits the home visiting program and her nurse, Amy Hawes, with helping her gain confidence as a new mother. With an infant just a few months old, Stephanie shared with Amy that she was finishing her book. Just as the home visitor shares parenting tips and advice with her home visiting participants, Stephanie would be sharing, through the book, coping skills for victims of bullying.

With newfound strength and invigorated creativity, she illustrated her story every chance she could—when the



*Home visitor Amy Hawes, right, encouraged Stephanie as a new mom and new author.*

baby was asleep or busy with dad. Home visitor Amy cheered her on: “I was so excited for her and it was great to share in that. Once she got to where she felt comfortable caring for her baby, she was able to carve out time to do what was needed to finish.”

Within one year, “Amelia the Fish” was listed for sale on Amazon.

“If someone had said to me, ‘In your son’s first year of life you will finish your book,’ I would have thought that’s unbelievable,” Stephanie says. The first-page dedication reads, “For my son James.”

Although Stephanie recently graduated from the home visiting program, Amy remains one of her biggest fans—along with the children and parents now reading about Amelia the fish’s journey to self-empowerment.

