

Kara Snyder 0:00

Hello, and welcome to the podcast, a podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University. I'm your host Kara Snyder and I serve as the assistant dean of marketing communications and constituent relations for the College. Each episode, we're sitting down with an alum of the College and today we have a chance to talk to Nayeli Lechuga-Knight. Naya is a human development and family sciences alum and currently serves as a senior care coordinator for the Livingston County Health Department. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 0:32

Hi, thank you so much for having me.

Kara Snyder 0:34

Well, this is going to be fun. Now, let's start at the beginning. Why did you choose ISU?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 0:40

Well, at the time that I chose ISU, I wanted to go back to school, but I wasn't sure which school will be the best. Because of the time I wanted to study psychology, or social work. I have one of my previous supervisors, she was an ASU student, and she loved it. I also have some family members that also went to ASU. And they always said really positive stuff about ISU. So I was like, I think is you it's going to be it.

Kara Snyder 1:17

So then tell me, you mentioned a couple of major options for you. How did you end up in human development and family sciences because I know that's not a major that people might not come here straight from high school without intent, right? Sometimes they discover it. So tell me what that path was like for you?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 1:36

Well, like I said, I was very set on studying psychology or social work. And I got a meeting with one of the advisors. And you know, we talked about what the classes will look like for psychology and social work. We'll also talk about the process of getting into the programs. And she told me that the time it was going to it was going to take me about a year, year and a half to get into both of those programs. And when I was like, you know, we were talking about it, she mentioned she's like we have this other program, though, that it seems like it's more of what you're looking for. And she talked to me about the Human Development and Family Science program. And I just fell in love with the program. I was like, I think this is it. I don't know what it was, but like the way that she explained it to me the way that she talked to me about the different opportunities that I will have after graduating, that just sparked a huge interest.

Kara Snyder 2:43

That's great. And I love to hear that. And it sounds like you found the perfect fit. So tell us how were you involved on campus in addition to your major.

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 2:55

Unfortunately, I wasn't very involved on campus, because at the time, when I started school, I was working full time. So I was going to school full time, and I was working full time. So my time was very limited. Other than my classes in some of the events that the university offer at the time, that was the only involvement I had, but I do wish I would have more time and I wish I would have like got involved in something.

Kara Snyder 3:24

Tell us how you balance that. I think that is a feat in and of itself to work full time and be a full time student. How did you do it?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 3:34

You know, I still wonder that myself sometimes when I was working full time, I was working with youth. And the supervisor that I had at the time, she was very supportive, which I think that was one of the the bigger pieces for me to to be able to go back to school, she was super flexible with my schedule, and just receiving the support from my spouse and receiving the support from my family. I mean, that was the only way I was able to make it but it was pretty difficult. I got I got pretty good with time management because you know, some of the classes, as you probably know, they're all over the place. Sometimes you have to take classes at night. Sometimes you have to take classes in the morning. And definitely Kevin the flexibility of my work. That was a huge help and learning time management skills.

Kara Snyder 4:29

What advice do you have for someone in your shoes that might also be working full time contemplating going back to school? What would you tell somebody?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 4:39

I'll definitely tell them don't get discouraged. I know once you start a school and they give you the class schedule, and you're looking at it and you get scared honestly, it's very scary and it's very stressful. But my advice is don't get discouraged find a way to manage your classes to fit in your classes with your work schedule. Even if you take one class at a time, two classes at a time. Just stay focused and don't get discouraged.

Kara Snyder 5:13

That's great advice. So tell us what was the initial job search like for you? Once you have that degree in hand? Did you continue at your full time job that you had at the time? Or did you explore a new avenue.

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 5:26

I was very fortunate. I stay at my at the job I had at the time, I was a youth care professional when I was in school. And the supervisor I had at the time, she helped me train to become a case manager. And that was the focus of in the aim for me after finish school. So I was

very fortunate to have a job lined up after I graduated. I think that is every college seniors dream right to have that ready to go. And you certainly worked hard to make that happen.

Kara Snyder 6:00

So how did you get from that position to your current role?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 6:04

Yes, I have to agree with you, I think I was definitely I was very fortunate to have that opportunity to have a job lined up. Because I did see some of my classmates at the time struggling a little bit to find a job or, you know, they were feeling the stress of finding the job after graduation. So after I graduated, and I became a case manager for for the youth, I wanted to do something else I wanted to work with the different population. I started working for the State of Illinois as a caseworker before I got to be where I'm at as a senior care coordinator. But I find out very soon that being a caseworker for the state of Illinois wasn't very fulfilling. And then I get this opportunity to become caseworker or a case manager for the elderly population.

Kara Snyder 6:55

I think that's such an interesting population. And I would love to hear more about your choice to work with them. I think that can be an intimidating population for people, especially students that are just graduating. So tell us about your work with the elderly?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 7:10

Well, I like to start by saying that I love this job. I love what I do. I love working with the with the aging population. I think unfortunately, they're one of the most vulnerable populations in our society. And I love the fact that I have the opportunity to provide them with resources and in sources that they will need on a daily basis.

Kara Snyder 7:39

What is your favorite part of your job?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 7:42

My favorite part of the job is definitely interacting with my participants or my clients, getting to know them have more of a personal like relationship with them, but also remaining professional, but also getting to know, you know, like there needs getting to know what their strengths or weaknesses are and finding the right resources for them and knowing that knowing that I was able to help somebody, yeah, I imagine leaving the office at the end of the day, knowing that you help someone is a feeling that has to be unmatched.

Kara Snyder 8:20

And what a wonderful career and how fulfilling that must be. And then I know on the flip side, there have to be some challenges, what do you consider to be the most challenging thing about your job?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 8:32

Oh, my gosh, yes, I think the most challenging part is navigating through the different policies, because we work side to side with the Illinois Department on Aging. And we also work under the policies of the Department of Human Services and HFS. So navigating the different policies, rules, the different information on insurance, that is definitely some of the most complicated part of my job. And also like, you know, we work with the, with the aging population, and we work with the with individuals or are on the end of life sometimes and losing some of those individuals is also very difficult.

Kara Snyder 9:22

I can only imagine thank you for sharing that with us. I think it's so important to have people like you in positions like this so that that population knows how cared for they are and respected they are when they're at that point in their life. So thank you for the work that you do.

Well, Nayeli we are going to finish with a speed round. So just go with your first instinct on these questions. What is your favorite place on campus?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 9:53

Definitely the library. I love the library when I was when I was in school. That was one of my favorite places to spend my free time in, you know, to do homework to listen to music to just relax while waiting for my next class.

Kara Snyder 10:08

Yeah, I just I love the library. Did you have a go to floor?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 10:14

I can't remember the floor, but it was the quiet area of the library.

Kara Snyder 10:20

Oh, sure. Tell us what are you reading or listening to right now?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 10:25

I am reading... Actually, I'm reading two books at the same time. I don't necessarily recommend that sometimes because you get a little confused with the characters in the stories. But one of the books I'm reading is called the distance between us. It's more by Reyna Grande. And the second book I'm reading is the scalpel in the Silver Bear. This is the second time I read that book.

Kara Snyder 10:49

They both sound good. We'll have to add those to our list. What is your favorite season?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 10:54

Definitely fall.

Kara Snyder 10:56

If you have a free Saturday, how would you spend it?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 10:59

Oh my gosh. Well, I will spend it by first of all slipping in. And then you know, drinking some a good cup of coffee, spending some time with my dogs and reading a good book.

Kara Snyder 11:14

Where did you go on your last vacation?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 11:17

I had the chance to go to Canada.

Kara Snyder 11:21

How was it? Would you recommend it?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 11:23

Oh my gosh. Yes. Yes, it was it was great. We went to Niagara Falls on the Canadian side. It was great, though. The weather was great. The vibe was amazing. The people they were very welcoming. And of course seeing the Niagara Falls. Right there. It was, it was amazing. They definitely recommend it.

Kara Snyder 11:43

Excellent. And I have to know Avantis gondola or Pub II cheese balls?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 11:49

Oh my god. This is this is a toughy I will have to go with about the gondolas.

Kara Snyder 11:57

And one last question for you. If you could give one piece of advice to a college student, what would you say?

Nayeli Lechuga-Knight 12:04

I will say, be open to the new experiences is something sparks your interest. Go for it. experience as much as you can embrace every opportunity that you get to get to great relationships with your classmates and your professors.

Kara Snyder 12:22

Thank you and thanks again for being here. That was Nayeli Lechuga-Knight, a senior care coordinator for the Livingston County Health Department. Join us next time on the podcast for more stories from our cast alumni.