

HUMANS OF SGA Stories

JoAnna Zamora



Born on July 13th, 2000 in Florida, as 1 of 5 siblings, JoAnna has been raised by her grandmother for as long as she can remember because her parents never actually were “parents”. She grew up in a small town, in a family with big expectations of her. Having lived without her mother and father around, she uses her past as motivation and refuses to let it determine her future.

“I grew up in Fairfield, Texas which is a small town with a population of maybe 5,000 people. When we were younger,

I did live in Palestine, Texas, but not for very long. I came to Fairfield as a baby, and I’ve been living with my grandmother ever since.

Now that I’m older, my grandma has told me things about when I was younger. My parents never bathed us properly, so she would come one day, and I would have a dress on and come back the next day, and I was still in the same thing. Of course back then I didn’t know any different, but now I’m questioning why and for what reason did this happen. My grandmother was actually really hard on us growing up. She disciplined us at the right times but sometimes not in the right way. I can remember her calling us different types of bad names when we did something wrong, and she would always call us ‘ungrateful’. This definitely caused our home to be very divided. We would come home from school, go in our rooms, keep to ourselves, and not speak to her because for one, we were afraid, and two, we didn’t feel like we were being loved. We were always glad to be so busy with school and sports because we’d have a reason to not be home as much as possible. On days we were home, she would wake us up like early in the morning on Saturdays and we would have to clean all day. I think it’s kind of good now because if not, I probably wouldn’t have any home training, so I mean I’m grateful for that. We used to have kitchen shifts, so one day I would clean it, another day my sister would clean it and we would go back and forth. I do remember one time I was asleep and I forgot that it was my day and everyone else went to sleep. She woke me up at like 12:30 AM on a school night spraying me with a water bottle and told me to clean the kitchen and I didn’t want to get a whooping so I did it even though I was so tired. My grandmother never physically abused us, but she said some hurtful things, to my oldest sister mainly, and that made a dent in our relationship with her for several years. It has improved tremendously this past year, which makes it a lot easier to visit home.

HUMANS OF SGA Stories

JoAnna Zamora

Luckily, because of my grandma, my siblings and I were never placed in foster care. I'm glad we weren't because my sisters are my best friends, although I wish I had a closer relationship with my brothers. There are 5 of us: my youngest sister, Jordan, me, my brothers Miguel and Jesse, and then Jaida, my oldest sister. I think the best thing about my childhood was my siblings. We've been through so much together. One of my brothers, Miguel, was actually separated from us, and we haven't seen him in years. The other four of us grew up really close, especially me and my sisters. There were several times when we could have been separated, but we were just glad to still be together. I haven't seen my oldest brother, Jesse in a little over a year, and we don't keep in touch often. But my sisters and I have always been closer, and I'm really glad we were never separated because I would be very crazy without them.



We didn't have much growing up, so we never got to go anywhere half the time. So one of my favorite things to do growing up was actually staying up late and talking about random things with my sisters. My oldest sister, Jaida, used to give us really good advice while she was in high school. I loved getting advice from her because she has been through more than anybody I know. Just learning life lessons from her about being strong and staying true to yourself. She is a Marine now, and during that process we were all kind of skeptical. But I think that was a good step for her because I could just see how her personality had changed in such a good way after boot camp. She's definitely my role model, and I've learned to persevere because of her.



I've always been really friendly, so it was never too hard for me to make friends. I used to be extremely shy growing up, though. My family tells me stories about how I would cry if anyone would even look at me. In junior high, I came out of my shell. I did band, and every single sport you can name; the same thing in high school. I had a really good experience. Thankfully, I was never bullied or anything like that. My transition from high school to college, however, was horrible, if I'm being completely honest. I thought that I was ready to be away from home but I wasn't, and I think that everyone else thought that too.

HUMANS OF SGA Stories

JoAnna Zamora



Of course, I was excited about coming to UNT because I love this school and the campus. Usually it's really easy for me to make friends, but I couldn't open up and be myself. I just really missed home. The entire first week of college I cried myself to sleep every single night because I wanted to go home, and I didn't wanna be here. It kind of actually took me like two weeks to get into the rhythm of everything.

My mom had my oldest sister when she was 19, I believe. Witnessing my mother get arrested was heartbreaking. I remember

standing in the window with my sisters watching my mom get put in handcuffs, and before she got in the car, she saw us crying and kept saying, "It's okay. I'll see you later, mommy loves you." I didn't see or speak to her after that for another few years. If I see her now, it definitely doesn't feel like a mother-daughter relationship. Seeing her leave now doesn't really upset me, and I'm kind of okay with not keeping in touch regularly because I'm afraid of getting my hopes up. We all are. My dad used to abuse my oldest sister when she was 5 years old, and I never knew about that until I was in maybe 5th or 6th grade, which is when my dad came back into my life. And no, that did not last. Before then, I hadn't talked to or seen him in a long time. I kind of feared for my life because I didn't want him to hurt us like he hurt Jaida. Thankfully, that didn't happen but I still have trust issues til this day. People come and go - especially for me. Both my parents have been arrested before, and there were a bunch of times when they would come and go inconsistently. So, I'm not sure if I can trust having close relationships with them anymore. They are both back on their feet and remarried, but I can't put myself in that situation again for that reason. Because of this, I have really bad trust issues and can't deal with inconsistency.

When I get older, I want to have kids but I don't want them to grow up without parents like me. I definitely used to beat myself up a lot about that. My childhood was very different, but I can't change it. I now realize that everything I've been through with my family has been a lesson for me. I know the expectations my family has of me, the expectations I have of myself, and I am determined to be a better parent and give my children the life they deserve."

- **JoAnna Zamora**

