

Daniel Alaniz

Hidalgo County Wellness Program Champion of the Month

Growing up, Daniel Alaniz was active. He says he played several sports, including football, basketball, and softball, “... almost every day. Those were all my activities.”

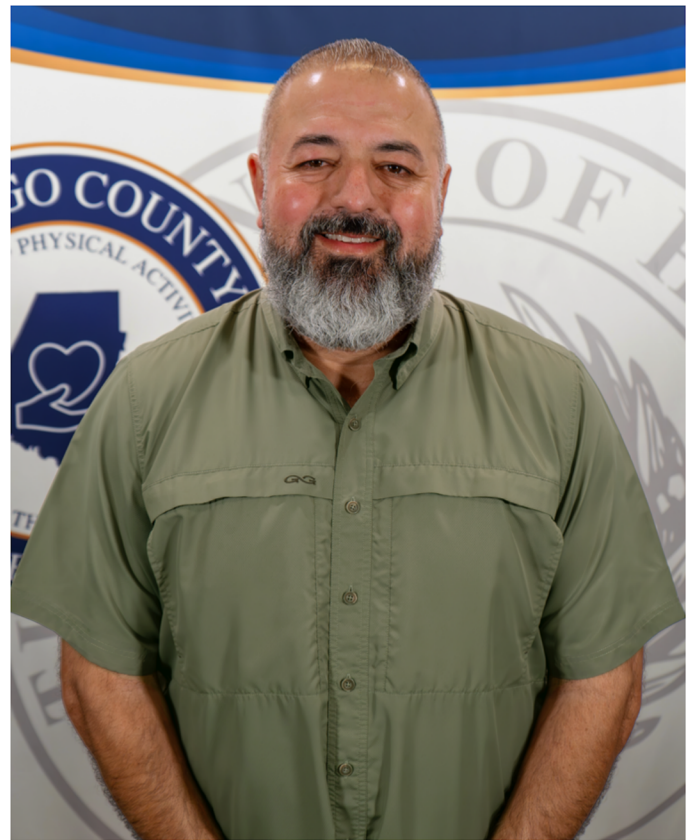
Then life became a little more busy. He married, had a son in his mid-20s, and later a daughter in his 40s. He put his health on the back burner for several years and went through a rollercoaster of events. It wasn't until he experienced a health scare a few years ago that woke him up – literally.

“I was with my son,” he recalls. “At a red light, I fell asleep and he woke me up without me even noticing.”

Alaniz says that moment really scared him because it wasn't the first time it had happened. He mentioned that he would be watching a movie and fall asleep instantly sitting down. After his scare at the red light, he met with his doctor and underwent a sleep study test.

He explained that the doctor told him, “It's a miracle you're alive.’ That scared me right there. He goes, ‘You're not resting at night. Your heart is working extra fast because you're not breathing at night. You stop breathing. It's your weight.’”

Alaniz was diagnosed with sleep apnea, a condition that stops and restarts your breathing while you sleep. A risk factor is excess weight. At the time he weighed nearly 300 pounds. He



Daniel Alaniz
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knew he needed to make a lifestyle change.

He remembered hearing about the free fitness classes at Precinct 2 Indoor Sports Complex in Pharr, so in August 2022, he took the first step and attended a session. Alaniz spoke with a trainer at the complex, asked for tips, and has kept going after work ever since. So far he has lost more than 40 pounds.

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*“Don’t be scared.
Don’t be timid.
[The wellness
services are] free!
Where else are you
going to get this?
Everywhere else
you have to pay
for it.”*

Know someone who should
be a Wellness Champion?
Nominate them!



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Alaniz had also looked into how he could improve his diet. He got some advice from the trainers at the sports complex and tried to educate himself more on what to look for.

In early 2023, the Hidalgo County Employee Wellness Program added a nutritionist to the team. After the nutritionist gave a presentation for his department, he made an appointment for a free consultation. They discussed the types of foods he enjoys, his health goals, what he could eat more or less of, and what to look for on a nutrition label.

“It’s been going well,” he said. “I’ve seen a big difference in my intake, in my muscle mass, my BMI – everything.”

Others at his office have taken notice of his efforts in investing in his health. Alaniz says when a colleague asks for advice or suggestions, he says all he can really do is point them in the right direction.

“I just tell them, go [to the sports complex], ‘Well, I’m embarrassed,’” Alaniz describes a conversation. “I say, ‘Don’t be. They’ll do modifications for you.’ ‘Well, we’ll see.’ OK, that’s all I can do. Just tell them to go.”

His new habits have seeped into his children as well. They have witnessed the change Alaniz has implemented in his life.

With his 11-year-old daughter, he says he doesn’t worry about her too much. She’ll ask for broccoli with lemon, doesn’t eat meat, and won’t eat fries. Alaniz mentioned his son picked up biking and has lost 25 pounds on his own. He says they encourage each other all the time to stick to their routines.

“I guess they can see a big difference. I mean, I was bigger back then,” he said. “I didn’t feel it, but I see the pictures and – whoa.”

Life is Alaniz’s main motivation now. He explained he used to just go to work, then go home, and feel depressed. Ever since

he started his workouts and changed how he eats, his mindset and mental health have progressed for the better. He boasted that at 51 years old, he feels 12 years younger and more energized.

“I see things more clearly. I’m not as irritated anymore. I’m not frustrated. It’s a big difference. It’s a big difference,” he expressed. “I didn’t believe it, but now I do believe it. With people talking about [mental health].”

Alaniz praised the Wellness Program and its resources. He added that a family member was going through depression and Alaniz remembered about the free short-term counseling services with Deer Oaks EAP Services that cover the entire household. His relative called the number and followed through.

Alaniz noted that his loved one is doing very well now.

Alaniz stresses to anyone ready to take their first step to a healthier lifestyle to not hesitate on the services and resources the Wellness Program offers.

“Don’t be scared. Don’t be timid,” he said. “It’s free! Where else are you going to get this? Everywhere else you have to pay for it.”

