

Alejandro Garcia

Hidalgo County Wellness Program Champion of the Month

Alejandro Garcia says he developed a strong work ethic at a young age. He was born in Laredo, Texas, and raised in Reynosa, Mexico until he moved to the U.S. at 14.

He explained he had moved in with his uncle and two of his sisters but was fully independent by the time he turned 16 years old. Garcia was able to support himself by working at Pizza Hut and selling leftover pizzas from work. He would also sell Mexican candy, which he bought while visiting family in Reynosa at school while focusing on his studies.

In high school, Garcia decided he wanted to be more physically fit. He says he had always had an issue with his weight as a child and became motivated to get physically fit. The gyms in Mexico were only accessible to those who were able to pay for them, unlike in the U.S., where gyms are available at all schools and open to students in extracurricular sports activities. He played soccer in high school all the way through college.

Garcia says it was during his time in college when he picked up on a routine.

“I used to wake up at 4:30 (in the morning) to go run,” he recalled. “Then lift weights at 6 at the gym. So that way, by the time I’m already in class by 8, I already did all my fitness stuff. Then I have the rest of the day to work and to go to school.”

That routine has changed slightly since he graduated, but Garcia held on to the commitment of a healthy lifestyle.



Alejandro Garcia - Accountant II, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Now, working for Hidalgo County as an accountant for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Program in the Department of Budget and Management, Garcia discovered the wellness benefits Hidalgo County provides. He had initially heard about the Employee Wellness Program before he was employed with the county. A friend of his, who was a county employee, had told him about the program and its services.

So when Garcia applied and secured the accountant position, it was a coincidence that his new supervisor was the former wellness coordinator. She encouraged him to participate in wellness events and activities.

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“I realized we have a facility we can go work out for free,” said Garcia. “I went to one of the events and even played baseball with some of the employees.”

Some of the events Garcia had attended were a Health Talk at the Annex Building and the Wellness Fair held back in May.

When it comes to the food he eats, he says he’ll eat almost anything. He admits his main hobby is likely going out to buy groceries and preparing his meals for the week. He really enjoys the preparation process.

“I like to know how I’m making the food,” Garcia explained. “I’d rather make the time to go to H-E-B and go to the meat market.”

Garcia uses his knowledge about budgeting to help him with how he eats. He gave a simple example of how he spends money on food.

“It is more convenient to buy something that is hot and ready to eat, but it’s not going to last me. I’d rather use that money and go to Walmart or H-E-B,” he explained. “Those chickens that they sell. I’d rather buy that because I know it’s going to last me for lunch and dinner. It’s going to cost me less than \$10, but it’s going to last me two meals. If I go to Whataburger or McDonald’s, I could maybe pay more than \$10 and it’s just going to be that meal and that’s it.”

He stressed that it’s important to make a budget for food. If you don’t have one, you’re just going to be spending money. Garcia discussed his diet.

“I think I eat about 3,500 calories a day. I give myself two cheat meals a week,” he says. “But if it’s the weekend [to visit family]and there’s nothing to eat and whatever’s there, I’ll eat it.”

Garcia says that his grandpa lives in a small town in Mexico. When he visits, there’s a place that sells burgers that he loves. If he knows he’s not going to be eating healthy, he adjusts his diet to include intermittent fasting.

His family is well aware of how important Garcia’s diet and fitness are to him. His sister and brother-in-law like the keto diet and sometimes his sister will send him pictures of their food and ask for tips.

At work, his coworkers see the dedication he displays when it comes to his diet and fitness. He is always encouraging others to participate in activities. Garcia says he usually preps all his lunches for the week on Sunday. It’ll usually be the same dish for each day. If he forgot something that he needs to make his lunch, he’ll stop by Walmart or H-E-B before work and prepare it in the breakroom.

Garcia credits his commitment and determination to his experiences growing up.

“My experience has helped me build a strong mentality not to let something distract me.” he expressed. “I was reading something that we cannot change the past. Right? But we can change the end result. Our actions that we’re doing right now, the ending result can be different.” He expressed that since he was forced to mature at a younger age, it helped him develop certain life skills he would need as an adult.

“I see it with my sister. She grew up with my mom and my younger sister, I grew up over here by myself. She wakes up at 10 a.m. on a Sunday and I’m like, ‘What are you doing?’” he chuckles. “On Saturdays, I wake up at 6-6:30 to go work out at 7 a.m. On Sunday, at 8 a.m., but that feels late for me. But that’s just my mentality that I need to wake up early.”

He admits that sometimes on the weekends he does not get a lot of sleep if he decides to go out with friends. However, if he already made plans to go run Sunday morning days before, he will stick to that plan.

“I don’t skip that,” he said. “Let’s say it’s Friday and I already told myself I’m going for a run on Sunday. Okay. Then Friday night, I’m invited to go out on Saturday. I’ll go have fun, but I will still go run Sunday [morning]. Mentally, I can’t. I cannot just say, ‘Oh never mind. Alex, rest.’ That’s something I’ll never tell myself. I need to do something that relates to fitness to feel good. Accomplished.”

Garcia is currently 26 years old, he is not married nor has any children, but he does want to be a father someday. Unfortunately, he was unable to grow up with his father, who passed away from a heart attack at the age of 40. Garcia expressed, for when the time comes, he wants to live a healthy lifestyle for his children to teach them good habits.

“I guess first I need to do that myself to be able to show them [healthy habits],” he explained. “I always told myself I want to take my kids to play soccer. I guess that’s my dream. Driving my kids to a soccer game or any sport that he or she likes. But first I need to try it. First I need to do it. I can’t teach them something I haven’t done.”

