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## Loving the Game is Greater than my Breathing!

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## **Loving the Game is Greater than my Breathing!**

By Josue Morales

Hello, my name is Josue Morales. I'm from Mexico, Morelia Michoacán. Morelia is the capital of Michoacán, it is the largest place that can be found in all of Michoacán. I lived in Morelia for most of my life.

I am 16 years old and I am a freshman in Fortuna high school. I migrated to the United States when I was 13 with my family – my older brother, my two sisters, and both of my parents. I didn't have a family in the United States so it was a bit difficult to adapt to living in the United States, but when I entered the soccer team it was easier to adapt because I made many friends. When I came to the United States, I came to Humboldt County because there my father had a friend who gave us a house to live in.

I have loved soccer since I was 6 years old. I started to like soccer because my mother played soccer when I was 7 years old for a team in Morelia, Michoacán. I liked going to see her play soccer at all her games and my father accompanied me. I started playing soccer when I was 7 years old in a team in Morelia. In Morelia if you want to be on a soccer team you have to pay because they need to pay for the uniform, travel, and food. My parents gave me the money to pay so I could be part of the team. It was very expensive but my parents made a great effort to pay for this by working longer hours. For one year, I had to stop playing soccer because we didn't have the money to pay for it. The economic situation was very difficult.

My family decided to migrate to the United States to have a better life and so I could attain a better education in the United States. I didn't speak English and in the small county of Humboldt, there weren't many teams when I arrived. I didn't play soccer for another year, sometimes I thought that I would never play soccer again because it was difficult to be able to find a team to play with. When I graduated from middle school and entered Fortuna high school, some friends told me that I could join the school's soccer team and so I did.

When I joined the team, my English and confidence improved because my teammates taught me words I did not know and they made me feel welcomed. My soccer teammates and friends have always supported me and helped me improve my English in and off

the field. They were always telling me “No that is not how you say it ; you say it like this... .” Most of my teammates are bilingual and they were born in the United States so they tell me how to say things correctly. I made Mexican friends and also white friends. It was a bit difficult to understand everything the coach was saying because he only spoke English but there were many people who spoke Spanish and they translated some things for me. This made me feel supported and welcomed and that I was part of a soccer family.

In 2021, we played against different soccer teams for five weeks. We stopped playing for 2 weeks because of COVID-19, there were some students in Fortuna High who were infected and it took us 4 weeks to be able to play another soccer match. Only 2 family members were able to come see us play due to COVID-19. We had to wear a mask on and off the field this made it difficult for all of us to play. We have not gotten used to wearing a mask in games because you can't breathe so it is difficult to play. We had to travel to play games but we couldn't take off our masks on those long trips. Breathing was hard, sometimes I felt I needed more oxygen but the love for the game was greater than my breathing.

When COVID -19 ends, I hope everything is better so that we can celebrate our team's wins and be able to play the whole tournament without wearing a mask. I want to be able to be with my friends after games. I also want to spend time with my family and go to the river and shop at the mall, and visit my friends who live in Los Angeles. Finally, I hope that when the COVID-19 ends everything will return to normal.