

MEET SAPHIRE: *A Mother's Love*



During a typical day, Saphire works the overnight shift at one of Children's Aid and Family Services' community homes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, goes home to take her 2-year-old son, Nolan, to preschool, drives to a local college to take classes, leaves to pick up Nolan, returns home to do her homework (and get a bit of sleep!) before starting over again.

A graduate of Zoe's Place, our safe haven for teen mothers and their babies who might otherwise be homeless, Saphire is grateful for the help she's received. "It's like a family at Zoe's Place," she says. "A lot of the girls don't have anyone to help them. The staff teaches important life skills and makes sure you learn to care for your child properly, go to work, and do your chores."

Saphire now lives in her own apartment with Nolan and is determined to provide him with a bright future. To help her achieve her goals, Children's Aid and Family Services has a program that provides individualized mentoring to young adults from Zoe's Place and teenagers who have left our foster care. Saphire meets regularly with Mobility Mentoring Specialist Tisha Mender. "Saphire sets goals and

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works tirelessly to achieve them," Tisha says. "For example, when Nolan was a baby, she worked two jobs and attended school at night to earn her GED."

The appreciation Saphire feels for Tisha's support is obvious. "My mom lives in another state, and I live by myself. Tisha is always there for me," Saphire shares.

Tisha also connected Saphire to Lauren Dwyer of Beal Bank, who is a financial literacy volunteer with the agency. She has counseled Saphire on budgeting, paying bills, building her savings and resume writing. Lauren is impressed with Saphire's drive and motivation: "She is very positive and hardworking. Saphire wants to get to the next level and build a better life for her son. I don't often see the tenacity and determination she possesses."



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Sapphire also participated in “Mother, Me,” a collaborative creative writing project centered on the idea of motherhood. She and the other mothers at Zoe’s Place spent months working with Jenny Stratton, a fellow from the Lewis Hine Center for Documentary Studies, and their photos were exhibited last fall at the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood. “I loved learning about photography,” Sapphire says, “And the project helped Nolan learn to express himself by posing.”

Children’s Aid and Family Services recognized Sapphire at its March Mayhem event with the Young Role Model Award. “Sapphire is an incredible role model, not just to her son but to everyone she meets,” says Jenny Stratton. “She is hard working,

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Last fall, Sapphire started college and earned a 4.0 GPA her first semester. She says Nolan is her motivation to succeed. “I love being a mom and want to do all the right things for my son to build a good life,” she says. “Nolan is my world and taught me the meaning of unconditional love. And if it wasn’t for Children’s Aid, I don’t know where I’d be.”



It is because of your generosity that we can help young people like Sapphire stay on a path to success.

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Thank You!***

Photos by Jenny Stratton



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