

# *Ebony's Story: Reaching a Milestone*

**Ebony's life is a testament to perseverance and hard work. She recently earned her associate's degree in business management from Berkeley College, the first woman in her family to do so. "I'm still trying to let all of this sink in," she says. "This is such an important milestone for me."**

Ebony has overcome enormous obstacles during her teenage years and early adulthood. While she was in high school, she became homeless, yet she was elected Vice President of Student Council. And she graduated while living in a shelter. "It was always my mission to go to college," she says, but housing insecurity forced her to drop her classes because she was moving so frequently.

It was while living in the third shelter that she found a flier for affordable, supportive housing for young people transitioning to independent living, a program that was managed by Children's Aid and Family Services. She met with Kelly Guerrieri, Director of Intake and Youth Support Services at Children's Aid and eventually moved into one of the apartments, where she remains today. "Ebony works so hard and she has the utmost resilience," says Kelly. "I am so proud of her accomplishments. She always wants to do better."

In addition to helping her secure affordable housing, Children's Aid staff encouraged Ebony to become a part of the agency's Mobility Mentoring program, which



(l. - r.): Mobility Mentoring Specialist Tisha Mender and Ebony; Celebrating her big day; Director of Intake and Youth Support Services Kelly Guerrieri shares a moment with Ebony.



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partners a dedicated mentor with clients so that, over time, they develop the maturity and skills needed to achieve and maintain economic independence. Tisha Mender, our Mobility Mentoring Specialist, is a professionally trained coach who helps our teens assess their strengths and weaknesses and set personal goals. Ebony's confidence in herself grew as she went over her goals with Tisha and saw the progress she was making.

# CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

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"The mentoring has really helped me," she says. "By writing my goals down, I saw that whenever I set a goal, I was meeting it. I've been on this journey alone and Tisha and Children's Aid have been my only support system."

"I have watched Ebony grow and become an adult," says Tisha. "She has faced many adversities but has never given up and has always continued to keep pushing through to achieve her goals. She worked hard to maintain her grades, while working full time. I have been honored to know her and inspired by her dedication and passion to never give up. She is truly a role model to all she meets."

Ebony works in the food service field and wants to share her story to help other young women who are struggling. "I've worked my way out of being on the streets," she says. "I have a voice and I want to use it to help other women. To let them know if I can do it, so can they."

*Children's Aid and Family Services also provided Ebony with funding from the Thomas R.S. Burgin Parents Fund to help her with expenses while she was in school. We could not provide this level of support to our young people without your help. Please make a donation at [www.cafsnj.org](http://www.cafsnj.org) today. Your gift is opening doors to brighter futures!*

## Vital Support for Teens Transitioning to Adulthood

One of our goals is to always be there for the children and teenagers who have been in our care. To that end, we provide vital assistance to them when they "age out" of our therapeutic foster care programs at 18 years old. The Thomas R.S. Burgin Fund helps former clients of Children's Aid and Family Services reach their educational goals and provides funding for emergencies. Young adults who remain in good academic standing are eligible for scholarships that help pay for textbooks, tuition and transportation. Any former client is able to apply for help with personal emergencies such as rental or utility assistance and car repairs.

## Mobility Mentoring

Five years ago, Children's Aid and Family Services began offering "Mobility Mentoring" to our teenagers that "age out" of foster care and the young mothers served by Zoe's Place, thanks to a generous grant from the Price Family Foundation. The program partners a dedicated mentor with clients so that, over time, they develop the maturity and skills needed to achieve and maintain economic independence. Our Mobility Mentoring Specialist is a professionally trained coach who helps our teens assess their strengths and weaknesses and set personal goals. The program started with 13 young people and has grown to 32. Of the first group, 92% now have their own apartments, which is an enormous accomplishment.

*We can only offer young people this extra support with your help.  
Please make a gift today at [www.cafsnj.org](http://www.cafsnj.org).*

**Your support also helps us provide foster care and adoption services; community residences, specialized services and day programming for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; free housing, safety-net services and mentoring for young mothers and their children in order to promote economic and educational mobility; alcohol and drug misuse prevention and recovery support; and other vital community programs.**

*Together, we are changing lives.*

*Thank  
You!*

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