

Naysha's Story: *Above and Beyond*

20-year-old Naysha's life has presented hardships that most people can't comprehend. She was in and out of foster care as a child, and her brother was murdered. Naysha had her son, Kameron, when she was 15. With the complex challenges of having a child to support, being a very young mother and attending high school, Naysha committed to her roles with determination.

Naysha was valedictorian of her high school class, graduating with one of the highest GPAs in Essex County. In her senior year, she qualified for a college level class at Rutgers, and earned an A. "I was able to go above and beyond," she says. "I was surprised, but also motivated. I felt like it was my job to show people that nothing in life can stop you, if you try."

Naysha applied to Rutgers and was offered a scholarship. She began attending after graduating high school, but hasn't been able to complete her degree yet due to several hurdles: Naysha's career path is nursing and the wait-list for this program is two years. In addition, she was homeless for a period of time, and had few friends or family to support her. Since then, Naysha enrolled in our Mobility Mentoring program and an area nonprofit helped her find an apartment in Essex County. Detoured by the wait-list at Rutgers, Naysha enrolled in vocational school to earn a CMA (Certified Medical Assistant), a national certification that will eventually allow her to move to a more affordable area. After she earns her certification in December, she intends to study for her LPN and from there, her RN.



Naysha and Kameron



Breaking the cycle of homelessness

One of Naysha's goals is to buy a house and break her family's cycle of homelessness, possibly in Georgia, where the cost of living is less expensive. More than anything, she wants Kameron to be able to play in his own yard. Another goal is ensuring that Kameron grows into an honorable young man. They play dress-up, and Kameron likes pretending to be a doctor or police officer. He is a happy and joyful natural leader who corrects his friends if they act up, telling them, "Use your manners."

"I love being a mom and spending quality time with Kameron," Naysha says. "He goes to preschool weekdays, so weekends we have outings at the park or the amusement park. Kameron loves to learn, and we read books together and practice with multiplication and addition flash cards."



CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

Naysha's primary support comes from Mobility Mentoring's Tisha Mender, who has assisted her with breaking her goals down into small objectives so she doesn't become discouraged. "I'm very grateful for Tisha and Children's Aid," she says. "I keep going despite what I've been through. As hard as they were, my difficult experiences made me who I am today."

Over the years, the agency has also provided the extra support Naysha needed to keep Kameron happy and healthy. Its Baby Basics program provided diapers, wipes, baby clothes, and holiday gifts for Kameron. "I didn't have the money to give Kameron a nice Christmas," she says. "The gifts from Children's Aid helped Kameron enjoy the holiday." Mobility Mentoring also provided Naysha with a laptop, a scholarship, and assistance with purchasing school uniforms.

"Naysha has gone through many challenging life experiences, but she has remained strong and positive, never giving up," says Tisha. "Naysha is an amazing mother, always putting her son's needs ahead of her own. During the pandemic, she worked with him daily on his academic skills."

"Never give up. Don't let anything stop you. Trials are part of life, but remember that everything is temporary."



Naysha and Kameron love spending time at the park during the weekend



Naysha's advice to anyone willing to listen: "Never give up. Don't let anything stop you. Trials are part of life, but remember that everything is temporary. Stay motivated." Naysha is also participating in an externship about children's services, contributing her ideas on how systems can be improved for the benefit of children. ●

Mobility Mentoring and Baby Basics are vital programs which provide young women like Naysha with the guidance and support they need to build brighter futures for themselves and their children. We could not provide these services without your support. Please make a gift to this year's holiday appeal at www.cafsnj.org or in the enclosed envelope.

Thank You!

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; alcohol and drug misuse prevention education and recovery support; and other vital community programs.



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