

# Tiara's Story: Perseverance

Born with a love of learning and a strong drive to succeed, Tiara consistently made the honor roll from the time she was 8 years old. But her childhood changed dramatically when she entered foster care as a teenager. "I was so depressed I would cry myself to sleep," she says. "I was lonely and I didn't see any light in my life."

Tiara credits school sports and extracurricular activities with helping her overcome the alienation and sadness she felt. When she was offered the opportunity to participate in the state's Life Skills Mentoring program, she was paired with a mentor, Kayla. They hit it off right away and after Tiara turned 18, she spent Thanksgiving with Kayla and her fiancé, Elias. Kayla and Tiara grew close, and eventually, Kayla and Elias invited Tiara to stay with them in their home.

"Tiara has become a beloved member of our family," says Kayla.

"I call Kayla 'Mom' because that's who she is to me," says Tiara. "She pushes me to do better and has so much faith in me."



Kayla, Tiara, and Elias.

*"Tiara has become a beloved member of our family."*

After graduating high school near the top of her class, Tiara attended Stockton University. She also enrolled in the Mobility Mentoring program here at Children's Aid, offered to young people aging out of foster care who are entering adulthood and losing vital support systems. One-on-one coaching helps them set goals, obtain higher education opportunities, and achieve financial independence.



# CHILDREN'S AID AND FAMILY SERVICES

“Mobility Mentoring helped me during my college years in so many ways, even helping me pay for meals on campus when I couldn’t afford them,” Tiara says. “I believe every community needs a program like it.”

Tiara also began coaching young people as a peer mentor at Rutgers University during her senior year at Stockton. After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice last spring, Tiara became a police officer. One of her passions is to work with at-risk children and use her experiences to inspire

them to overcome obstacles and achieve success. She recently joined Children’s Aid as a Peer Navigator, using her experience to mentor children and teens in Treatment Foster Care. “I know what it feels like to be in their shoes and the perseverance it takes to get through it,” she says.

Children’s Aid and Family Services Mobility Mentoring Specialist, Annette Flores, says she has had the privilege of knowing Tiara for the past 3 years. “Tiara is a very determined and positive person. She will go as far as she wants to go. Nothing is getting in her way, and we are so proud of her!”

## Impact of Mobility Mentoring

Mobility Mentoring is a five-year program designed to help support at-risk youth entering adulthood by equipping them with essential life skills. It is fully funded by the generosity of our supporters.

**In 2023, there are 20 mentees in the program.**

- 100%** have a bank or financial account
- 95%** have earned their high school diploma or GED
- 88%** are enrolled in school and/or working
- 40%** are seeking higher education, college or training certification
- 10%** have earned their bachelor’s degrees

## The impact of your gift:

**\$100** | provides towels and bedding

**\$250** | provides books for school

**\$500** | provides driving lessons

**\$600** | provides a laptop for use in studying

**\$1,000** | provides a security deposit for an apartment

# DOUBLE the impact of your donation today.



An anonymous donor has offered to match your gift dollar for dollar this holiday season! Let’s maximize the benefit of this heartfelt and intentional gift with your donation for those who need it most.

Please make a donation today to ensure more young people leaving foster care have the support they need to create independent futures.



*Thank You!* <https://cafsnj.ejoinme.org/holiday2023>