

Essence: A Born Leader

Essence's journey from a challenging childhood to a promising future is a testament to her remarkable resilience. Just a few months away from graduating from Rutgers University with a double major in psychology and social work, Essence exudes maturity and strength. Despite being in and out of foster care and shouldering the responsibility of caring for her younger siblings from a young age, she never lost sight of her goals. At 10 years old, she bravely testified to a family court judge about the unsafe circumstances in her home, ensuring that she and her siblings were placed in a safer environment.

"I remember thinking this is a critical moment in my life," she says. "I'm going to stand up for myself and take charge of my future." This moment, and many others like it, has shaped Essence into the resilient and determined person she is today.

Essence has been a member of Children's Aid and Family Services' Mobility Mentoring program for three years. She excelled academically and personally, thanks to the unwavering support of her mentor, Annette Flores, Youth Development Specialist. "I was struggling when I entered the program my freshman year," Essence says. "Annette has given me so much support and guidance and taught me to do things on my own."



Clockwise, (l. – r.)
Essence and her
mentor, Annette
Flores; studying in
Kenya; and with her
brother and sister.

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Mobility Mentoring has also provided critical financial support, including a stipend for rent, and grocery and bus cards. "Essence is a born leader and a go-getter," says Annette. "She loves to help others."

Essence's passion for multicultural studies is palpable. She studied abroad in Kenya and Belize in the summer of 2024, an experience that broadened her horizons. In



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Kenya, she spent a month working with refugees from around the world, helping them establish an arts center. In Belize, she immersed herself in the culture of the indigenous people, learning their history and sharing their stories. "I have a deep love for multicultural studies," she says. "I believe in the power of listening to others and sharing their experiences."

Essence's dedication to her community is unwavering. Born and raised in Newark, she is committed to supporting young people in the area. She interns at a nonprofit organization that provides alternative sentencing programs and other youth-based services and also serves as a mentor to new students at Rutgers.

After graduating in the spring, Essence plans to become a case manager, allowing her to directly impact young lives. Her long-term goals include earning a Master's Degree in Public Administration and starting a nonprofit for misguided youth. "I want to use my experiences, both good and bad, to advocate for policies to mend the foster care system," she says. Her future plans are a testament to her resilience and commitment to helping others.

Grateful for the help she's received from Mobility Mentoring, Essence says, "The steps I took with Annette brought me to where I am now. Local programs like Mobility Mentoring make a big impact."

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 2024, there are 16 mentees in Mobility Mentoring.

- 100%** have a bank or financial account
- 94%** are enrolled in school or working
- 62%** are pursuing higher education, college degrees or training certifications
- 12%** have earned their bachelor's degrees

The impact of your gift:

\$100 | provides professional attire for internships or interviews

\$250 | provides meals and 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 will match your gift dollar-for-dollar up to \$50,000 this holiday season. Help us amplify the impact of this thoughtful and meaningful gift by donating to 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!



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