

## A Success: From Foster Care to Fordham University

***The letter below was given to Dawn Stevens, a St. Vincent de Paul case worker, from one of her most successful clients. We know that it will inspire you as it has all of us!***

Kiesha Guyton (SVdP Rent Subsidy Program Participant)

August 30, 2010



I lived with my grandmother and four siblings in Fort Green Brooklyn for eight years of my life. During that time, I was exposed to extreme poverty and neglect by my alcoholic grandmother. I was removed from my home and placed into foster care because of the perilous circumstances. My foster home became my permanent residence, as well as, a much safer and more constructive environment for me. I was thankful to have good people in my corner that understood my disadvantages, which included a learning disability and years of ill-treatment by people I trusted.

Early in my adult life I found myself in a predicament; I was pregnant and without a job or a home to safely provide for myself or my child. I had my son by the age of 21 and two months later we began living in a shelter. There are a number of variables that led me to becoming homeless, but I now know that the foremost cause was being ill-equipped for adult life.

I constantly thought about getting on my feet and furthering my education while living in the shelter. I met Mrs. Stevens in 2006 and I was very fortunate to qualify for the rent subsidy program for homeless individuals with disabilities. I felt that this program could help me change the cycle of poverty for my son and create a better future for us as a family. Working with Ms. Stevens has been a blessing. She has been more than supportive and she motivates me by helping me overcome everyday challenges.

As part of the program I was required to develop an action plan that illustrated my strategy for improving my life. I decided to attend school to become a social worker because it is a profession that I admire. I want to help others in the very way that I have been helped. Moreover, I understand the needs of people in the system and I know I can be creative in helping them solve their problems. Since entering the Rent Subsidy program in 2006, I have completed my associate's and bachelor's degrees and have been accepted to Fordham University's Graduate School of Social Services to receive my Master's in Social Work. I am pleased that St. Vincent de Paul agreed to assist me for one more year so I can finish school. I will graduate from Fordham University with my MSW in 2011.

I'm truly grateful for the opportunity that St. Vincent de Paul has bestowed upon me. Now I can ensure that my family is financially stable and also help others overcome their barriers and become self sufficient. It is the obstacles that I have faced and conquered, and the benevolent people that I've met that have given me the inspiration to always believe in myself. Thank you for all that you've done and will do.

With gratitude,  
Kiesha Guyton

***Stories like these inspire SVdP Vincentians, staff, and volunteers to continue providing direct aid to people experiencing hardship on Long Island. Thank you to all of our donors, volunteers, and friends who provide the support to propel the work of the Society.***