



# Passages Press

Congratulations 2012 Graduates!



Mackenzie Gray



Katelyn Davis



Jessica McBrien



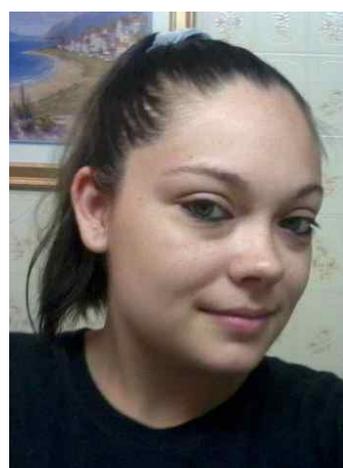
Melissa Martz



Arabella Gelman



Ashley Havener



Amanda Coley

June 2012

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# Mackenzie Gray



Kenzii & Thomas

At the beginning of my freshman year of high school if someone told me within the next year I would get pregnant, move in with my boyfriend an hour away, and graduate two years early, I would have called them “nuts” and walked away. This Nostradamus I never met was right. The end of my freshman year I found out I was pregnant. My first thought after, “Oh my god, I’m going to get fat!” was, “School... this isn’t going to work...” I went to my guidance counselor to see what I could do and he told me about the Passages program in Camden. I was hesitant at first about calling because it was in Camden and I didn’t have a ride every day. Finally, in the fall after starting my sophomore year I called Passages. Come to find out, they come to your house once a week! That changed things...

I did my interview and challenges and was told I would start around January or February. I got a call two weeks after getting my acceptance letter and had my first class with Erica on November 17, 2011. I got right to work on my first transcript about pregnancy. It was 15 pages long... oops? After that novel, I did two to three transcripts a week. By the time my son was born on January 11, 2012, I had done twelve assignments. I had completed half of all

required schoolwork in two and a half months! My goal was to graduate in 2013, one year ahead of my class at Medomak Valley High School. I’m graduating in 2012 - two years ahead of my class! Crazy? Maybe. Impossible? No way.

I would not change anything about the Passages program or my time there. No, I didn’t get the “high school experience,” but getting a diploma early opens up a lot more opportunities sooner than completing regular high school or a G.E.D would.

Erica was there for me the entire eight months I was in the program. The rare instance I had a question, she was there to answer it to the best of her abilities. She was by far the greatest teacher I’ve ever had.

When a teen girl says they’re pregnant or have dropped out of school, I tell them about Passages. It is possible to get a real high school diploma with a child. Is it hard? Yes, but it’s worth that challenge. The other girls in this program and I can be counted as statistics, too; ones not talked about often. We are teen parents who *did* graduate. Some of us may even go to college.

Passages saved my life – well, my school career at least. Erica, Heather, Andrea, Martha and The Community School, thank you for everything.

*The sky’s the limit.*

*Push the limits.*

*Touch the stars.*



## Kenzii's Passage Journal

Interest meeting:

I got a more solid idea of what I'm going to do. Jan told me the museum was a little high of a dream, so I settled for a library. I'm going to exhibit my photos sometime in the next couple of months. He also told me about how to make a book on *Blurb*. I think I'll do that, too. My task is to take pictures of people, my least favorite subject. This should be interesting.

Proposal meeting: My for-sure plan is to exhibit my pictures at the Waldoboro Public Library. I am going to make a book on *Blurb.com* and have a sample one available for people who are in it or are just interested in ordering. I have to plan photo shoots with people so I can take pictures. I don't know how easily that will work for the lack of transportation on my part. I'll make it work!

I got an internship at Arch Framery on Fridays! Yay! I'm trading labor for photo matting. I have taken quite a few pictures. Koda and I are going to hang out and take some of her and Emma and Emma and Thomas.

I had to cancel my photo shoot because of rain and no one wanted to attend but Koda. Wrenches in my plans, not cool. Oh well, Livia is coming back for the summer so I'll be able to take pictures of her and with her.

Beach date! Livia & I went to the beach today. We got a lot of good pictures. I took one I really like. It's of the sky with part of one tree, one cloud and the sun. I love it. It was my son's first time at the beach so I def had to take pictures of it. I got a lot of really cute ones of him and Livia. I wanted to take some of the sunset but it got WAY too buggy.

Oh well, this is cool. My boyfriend and I just broke up. I don't know where I'm going to stay. This is great. My mom said I can stay with her, but she doesn't have Internet and I have stuff to do and send online. Nothing ever works for me.

I had a meeting with Jan to discuss my progress and select pictures to be printed to

be matted and to be displayed. I kind of fell off the bandwagon the last week or so with the breakup and everything, but now I have Internet at Livia's house so I'm right on track.

On track? Nope, never mind. I went to put a couple of finishing touches and more pictures on my website Tuesday and it messed everything up beyond repair... Okay, that's cool, I'll just start over. That one wouldn't let me replace pictures! So I start again, I got fed up with that one because of the music. Finally at 5 a.m. I went on a different website and made it from there. At noon, after 16 hours of trying and no sleep, I finally finished it. [www.mgrayphotography.webs.com](http://www.mgrayphotography.webs.com)

My presentation is tomorrow, I feel like I'm totally ready.

## Arabella Gelman



Arabella & Zane

My experience being in the Passages Program has been nothing but amazing. I have learned so much, not just about different core skills, but I've learned a lot about myself as a person and especially as a parent!

Having completed this program has given me a newfound respect for myself knowing that I accomplished something this huge after many people never thought I would. As of June 16th at 2 pm I will be a high school graduate and I could not be more proud or excited for myself. The journey has

only just begun and I plan to continue accomplishing great things, for not only me, but for my son Zane, as well.



## Passage: Rock City Café Performance on June 2, 2012

I feel like this performance was a really positive experience for me and hopefully, for everyone that was able to go.

I do feel like I risked a lot going on stage in front of people I knew and people I didn't know performing my own songs - my diary, basically. I could have been rejected and booed off stage. I was being judged, no matter what, it's only human nature, but I feel like I did a good job, and I feel like everyone felt that same way. I feel very confident about how the performance went, other than a few things.

It took a lot of time, energy and stressed out days to get to this point. I had to meet with my team and find time to work, take care of my son, and get together this performance. The night of the performance was scary, but as the night went on I became more and more comfortable in front of everyone. I had to make sure that I had everything organized for the performance and that everything in one way or another would come together.

After the performance, I had so many questions! I, of course, will always feel as if I

could have done better, but I want to know if I really will, if I can. I want to see how I can further this as more of a passion/career goal, of course keeping a sliver of reality in the equation. This will never be a closed topic; it is my life, and my life will surely continue.

Like I said before, I will always feel like I could have gone about this differently. There is no specific reason; it's just something we all think about. What if? I learned so much during this time, though; I lived in the moment, and I just let myself relax and do what I love to do. I know that I have in me to be a confident young woman and I plan to spend the rest of my life being so, and also teaching my son to love himself and be comfortable and confident in who he is and what he does.

*The following are three of Arabella's original songs that she performed:*

### Dreamer

Can you hold on now  
Never dream of letting go  
Make us proud  
I know you will  
Take each step  
Move a little farther now  
And soon we'll fly away

Don't make a choice  
Take a chance  
Dance a song  
Or sing a dance  
Just take a breath and let out a sigh  
We've made it this far and  
We're high as the sky

It was hard  
And we may have struggled  
But we've come so far to date  
It won't get any easier  
No way no how  
But let's all look around us  
What we've got so far.

## I Believe

### Within Ourselves

Have you seen me,  
have you seen me these days;  
I feel like I am floating away  
drifting with an ocean, with an ocean  
trying to break free of my mind

Will you hear my calls  
Will you say my name  
If I get lost within myself  
Will you hold my hand  
through thick and thin  
be there when I need somewhere  
to fall?

Have you noticed these days  
the sun and its rays parading itself  
through the cloudy days  
like the drive of the sun  
to push through those clouds  
we will achieve the unbelievable

Will you hear my calls  
Will you say my name  
If I get lost within myself  
Will you hold my hand  
through thick and thin  
be there when I need somewhere  
to fall?

Standing up, taking breaths  
Living life to our best  
Reviving our minds, to open  
Up our souls

Will you hear my calls  
Will you say my name  
If I get lost within myself  
Will you hold my hand  
through thick and thin  
be there when I need somewhere  
to fall?

You held me close  
you let me be  
You held me up  
you set me free  
Now look at me.  
I'm all that I can be  
I thought I'd never get this far  
But I had to believe in me  
And see past this fear that  
I'd never get anywhere  
I made it. We made it.  
I believe.

## Ashley Havener



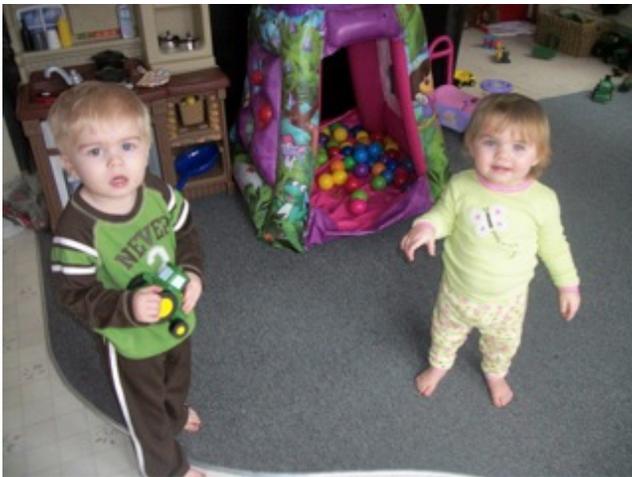
Ashley & Jason with Trey & Adalyn

There's nothing I can say I didn't like about the Passages program. Being in this program and being able to do my Passage, which was observing occupational therapists and presenting what I've learned, was so rewarding.

Honestly, making all the phone calls involved and setting all the times up for meetings and observations was a real struggle; even having to present that information to my team was challenging, since I'm a shy person, but I was able to overcome my anxiety and do it all! It really made me see who I really am and what I am

capable of actually doing. I never thought I could come so far, especially in such a short amount of time. Being able to do my Passage made me decide what I wanted to do after I graduate, which is to attend college for occupational therapy, something I never thought I could do.

It really worked out being in this program; it was very convenient with having two children. My teacher, my family, and everyone involved with the school were very supportive and really had faith in me at succeeding to do this. I'm very thankful to be a part of such an amazing program.



## On Reading & Writing

I've learned to improve my reading comprehension by reading in a quiet area, as I have a hard time focusing if too much is going on. Another way is by taking notes. During my biology class, I took a lot of notes and that helped me to remember a lot of the things. I could always go back and read the notes quickly if I forgot anything.

Good writing is using correct grammar and punctuation, but that is not all that good writing is. Good writing is also being able to express yourself depending on what you're writing and making the sentences clear and easy to read.

Before I started Passages I was not into writing at all; I've always thought too much of what people thought of my writing. Being able to express myself well has been a long struggle for me. The more I've been reading

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and writing, the easier it has come to me and is something that I really enjoy now!

Both of my children love books - all types of books! Some of our favorites are the Dr. Seuss books, picture books, Elmo books, and so many more. My daughter loves books with babies in them and my son loves anything to do with trains or trucks. I read to them both every night before bed with a book of their choice. They enjoy it so much and both listen to the whole story. It's a great bonding time for all of us!

## Jessica McBrien



Jessica & Audreena

The Passages program was one of the best things that has ever happened to me. When I dropped out of high school, I thought that I would never be where I am now. The teachers were all amazing. During my struggles of being in Passages, I always had the teachers there for me if I needed them for anything. I grew a tremendous bond with my teacher Heather and I plan to remain in contact with her after I graduate. Heather pushed me to become stronger and to not give up when life threw its turns at me. I've had a rough year, and if I didn't have my teacher there, I don't know how I would have made it. I am truly honored to be calling myself a graduate of the Passages

program of The Community School. Congrats class of 2012! We did it!



## Decision Making

*Excerpts from Jessica's Passage Presentation*

When I first met "Bob", he never told me about any trouble he may have been in. I was attracted to him because he was hot, an older man, and I felt lucky to be with someone like him. He had a bad boy persona, and I think that's what attracted me the most. Some red flags were: he was homeless; he didn't have a job; he smoked marijuana; he had kids he didn't see.

When I asked Bob why he couldn't see his kids, he told me that his "baby mamas" wouldn't let him see them because he had been in so much trouble. Later, I found out that wasn't the only reason. He had been a suspect in three prior investigations of child abuse. And because I never found out for certain and never listened to what people were telling me, bad things happened to my daughter.

Though I knew he stole stuff from stores, I still was attracted to him. I ask myself why every day. His family and friends told me *he lies, he cheats, he steals all the time, and he was involved with DHHS*. I ignored everything everyone said and went about dating him.

I wasn't using birth control. I found out I was pregnant at the end of August 2010. Bob went to jail three days after finding out I was pregnant and didn't get out until Audreena was one month old. I went into DHHS to speak with Bob's caseworker to ask if he was allowed to be around kids. I wanted to be 100% sure that I didn't lose custody for

letting him see her. The worker told me, "He does not have to be supervised, although we recommend it."

While he was in jail, I was making good decisions. I started school, had a healthy pregnancy and broke up with him. I gave birth to my beautiful daughter, Audreena Marie Blackington on May 8, 2011, at 3:42 pm. She was 6 lbs. 15 oz. and was 19¾" long.

I had postpartum depression and my doctor prescribed me Zoloft, but it only helped so much.

I made the decision that I didn't want to cut Bob out of Audreena's life completely, so we set up visits for every Monday night. I would go stay the night with him and his cousin with Audreena. He would get up with her and do everything correctly. I had no concerns at the time.

After starting visits, Bob and I talked a lot about getting back together and as I felt so alone and so in love, we did. To be honest with him, I told him things that I had done behind his back. He cheated on me a few days later for revenge. I was so upset I threatened to take Audreena away until he grew up. A couple of weeks later, he called me wanting to see Audreena. I told him that he wasn't going to see her if his new girlfriend was around. He got mad and told me I was a bad mother for not letting him see her. That got to me, so I made plans to let him see her that night – Thursday, July 7<sup>th</sup>.

Bob and his cousin didn't come to get Audreena until 9:30 pm. I had to wake Audreena up to get her ready. I told him to call me every hour. After more than an hour had passed, I called him. Audreena was screaming in the background. He couldn't calm her down, so I tried to find a ride over there to be with her for the night so they could bond without Audreena being upset. That became a conflict for Bob's new girlfriend so I never ended up going over.

I called him numerous times the next morning with no answer. I called a friend for a ride to pick Audreena up. Bob finally called me to say he was in Rockland with her. When I first saw her I knew she didn't feel good. She

was very fussy; I couldn't put her down without her crying; she wouldn't eat.

When I needed to change her diaper I lifted her shirt and saw a mark that at first glance looked like a spider bite. I called the doctor because I wasn't sure if that was what was making her sick. After getting her dressed I noticed that she had a huge bruise on her head that I hadn't noticed before because she has such dark hair. When the doctor's office called me back, I told them and got her in that afternoon.

They could also see that she didn't feel good. Bob changed his story about what happened numerous times. Dr. Goldsmith sent us to Penbay to have her looked at because they wanted to make sure she didn't have bleeding on the brain. When we got to the hospital, they did numerous tests, including a spinal tap. I could not watch them do the spinal tap. A catscan revealed that Audreena did have bleeding on the brain. It was too foggy that night to Lifeflight her to Maine Medical Center, so we had to wait for an ambulance to come down with a medical team. When they got there, they strapped Audreena into what looked like an incubator and had me sign a bunch of paperwork.

My mom, Bob, and I drove down there immediately after they took her. When we got there she was safe and secure in a little metal crib hooked up to all kinds of wires. A lot of things were running through my mind at the time. I didn't want to believe Audreena's own father would ever do anything to hurt her.

On Saturday Dr. Ricci of Spurwink came to do an examination of the bruise and mark on Audreena's stomach. He called Bob and me in separately to talk. He asked me questions about Bob and asked me about my stress levels. After talking to Dr. Ricci, I tried to take a nap in the waiting area. I had already been up for over 24 hours. After a twenty-minute nap I got woken up to talk with the eye doctor. It was a relief to hear that nothing else was wrong with my little girl.

The detective and DHHS worker showed up that afternoon and did interviews one

after the other. The detective was not present during my interview. Saturday night I could only see my daughter for five minutes. Security told me that Audreena's Injuries were intentional and that she was not to be seen without supervision. I slept maybe an hour that night. Sunday came and Bob left with his girlfriend and his cousin.

Later that evening I got a phone call from the same detective who had spoken with Bob and my mom the day before. I agreed to speak with him in person. The interview was two-and-a-half hours long. By the middle I remember feeling like everything that happened was my fault and started blaming myself for her injuries. I remembered getting frustrated with her one night that week. She was up all night crying. I remembered picking her up and saying, "Stop crying," to her. I moved my hands slightly when I said it - not fast, not hard, just slightly. When the detective asked me, "Is that an acceleration, deceleration movement?" I said yes, because technically I moved my hands.

The next day I got a phone call when I got home from the hospital. The detective told me there was a warrant out for my arrest. I called my dad who took me to the Knox County Jail where they patted me down, asked me EVERYTHING that I was wearing right down to color and style, fingerprinted my hands every which way and took my "mug shot." I was terrified.

After my arrest, I tried very hard to move forward. I could only see my daughter twice a week for two hours in the beginning. Months went by and they moved my visits up to three times a week for two hours each day. During that time I was working at Beth's Farm. I was very stressed and quit there because co-workers were causing me problems. I regret it now because I was making \$9.50 per hour and loved the kind of work I was doing.

After that visits were every day for five hours. Soon after that I got two overnights with her, and a couple of months ago the FRP program stepped in and Audreena is

finally moved back in. It was a long ten months, but I've finally done it.

FRP stands for Family Reunification Program. I wasn't too fond of the idea of another group of people stepping into my life after ten months of other state workers. I am pleased to say I have already learned a lot from the program about parenting. Also, my workers, Josie and Melissa, have been very helpful in helping me look for housing and employment and in getting the things that I need for Audreana.

I just want to say that it's very crucial in life what kind of decisions you make. The decisions you make can impact your life completely. I'm very lucky to still have my daughter here with me. After what happened, I have been careful to only make decisions that will better myself. Make sure to be cautious and take it one day at a time.

## Melissa Martz



Melissa & McKayla

"We all have big changes in our lives that are more or less a second chance." I was only 17 years old when I found out I was pregnant with my daughter McKayla Rose. My pregnancy never really hit me until I saw her squirm around on the ultrasound and from that day on I knew I wasn't just responsible for *my* life but another one, too. I

ended up losing my old "friends", losing out on my teenage years, and losing people's respect; the last thing I wanted to lose was my place in the crowd of graduates. Unfortunately, that happened, but my teacher ended up sitting me down and showing me the Passage program DVD.

I met with Martha who gave me three challenges to do to see if I could go into the Passage program or not. I completed the challenges as fast as I could and awaited my letter. I WAS ACCEPTED! I was so happy to have people in my life who believed in me and to have a second chance to graduate with my high school diploma and to give my daughter the best life I could possibly give her.

Since I've been in the Passages program I've met new friends who are actually dealing with the same challenges; I've learned first aid; and I've grown into a stronger, more independent person. I'm finally able to wear my cap and gown proudly, now that I feel as though I have finally accomplished a huge goal in my life.

I thank everyone who has helped me get where I am today. This includes: Heather and the Passages staff, my parents, my boyfriend Riley, my friends, and my beautiful daughter McKayla!

## Exploring a Profession

*Excerpts from Melissa's Passage Presentation*

In the beginning of my Passage I had the chance to visit Capilo Institute, a cosmetology school in Augusta. The people seemed very nice and the school schedule was flexible. I was thinking about signing up for classes this November but once again my fear of driving took over and just told myself that it wasn't for me. So my question was: what's better, school or apprenticing?

Timing: Timing is a huge thing when it comes to beauty school or any apprenticing. You have to be very committed. Cosmetology school is costly at first but better to learn more things by the book. Cosmetology school wins for timing.

Laws: Maine requires you to do twice the

amount of hours to apprentice than beauty school. Therefore, cosmetology school wins for Laws.

**Hands-on experience:** A cosmetology apprenticeship would allow you to get your hands-on experience much sooner; schooling would allow you to get more text book learning. Apprenticing wins for hands-on experience.

**Finding a job:** both apprenticeships and cosmetology school can be very helpful to finding a job in the field. Some employers feel that a classroom education provides students with the appropriate skills and a more well-rounded curriculum. Both cosmetology schools and cosmetology apprenticeships give you experienced instructors helping you every step of the way and overseeing your development, but it depends on the employer whether they prefer an apprenticeship over schooling. This round is a tie.

Jenn is a licensed aesthetician and makeup artist who has worked in the fashion and beauty industry for 17 years in New York City, and Boston. She passed her aesthetic boards in Maine through the Capilo Institute. Before moving into the Camden area Jenn started at the Star Fish Center in South Thomaston. She felt that being self-employed she would have more control over her education as an aesthetician and decided to move the business into Camden. The location was completely renovated and designed for the spa. It was later called Beauty Mark due to a dream she had.

Interview with Debi, A Beauty Mark Worker:

*What do you do?*

I'm a nail technician.

*What made you want to work at Beauty Mark?*

Beauty Mark has a good rep and wonderful people.

*How long have you worked here?*

10 years

*What school did you attend if any and do*

*you think it helped you in the long run?*

I apprenticed in Scarborough. I had to do 400 hours but in the long run it was a good experience.

*What else might you have changed if anything?*

Not a thing.

Before doing my Passage I was shy and only stayed in my comfort zone. It was so bad that when Riley and I would go out to eat he would have to order my meals for me. My parents would also have to do things for me, such as call my doctor to make my appointments or even ask for my medication. So during this process I have received challenge after challenge, risks after risks. It was all worth it in the end, though. Now I can talk to people I have never met before and try to start a conversation. I can go places by myself, and I can talk in front of you all today.

## Katelyn Davis



Katelyn & Bentley

The Passages program affected my life because if it wasn't for Passages I wouldn't be in school and I really don't know what I would have done with my life. They gave me a second chance to actually work for a diploma. I like that the teachers come to your

house and I got the one-on-one help that I needed. All the core skills are stuff that you need to know in real life. I would have liked more field trips to go places with the kids. I learned that I actually can finish school and do something with my life even with having a kid, and it has made me stronger doing all this on my own.

## Lil Zombie's

*excerpts from Katelyn's business plan*

LIL ZOMBIE'S will carry high quality but truly unique gift items to provide emergency preparedness items for children, activities for children and baby gifts. There are many gift basket businesses but the competition for businesses that sell emergency and activity bags for children are very few. We are going to be family owned with a real person the customer can speak to about their specific needs. LIL ZOMBIE'S is also willing to deliver locally. This might be especially advantageous for birthdays and special events. LIL ZOMBIE'S will also listen to the customer's specific needs and create a personalized basket.



LIL ZOMBIE'S will offer "gift bag making or emergency bag making" home parties in which the participants create their own gift with a choice of items. LIL ZOMBIE'S will also raffle off baskets in various drawings for profit and for publicity. Raffle tickets would be available at local businesses that are

receptive to this idea. Raffle tickets will be sold for \$2.00 a ticket. Radio and media advertising will not be pursued at this time but might be used in the future as the business grows. LIL ZOMBIE'S would also like to participate in various children's events, selling some merchandise to donate to charity in the future when profits increase

*The idea for Katelyn's business came from her an intense personal experience:*

Bentley (20 months old) and I were watching cartoons and he was fine. The next minute he started to twitch and it scared me so badly. I looked down at his eyes, and they were rolled back and he was foaming at the mouth and having a seizure. I called the ambulance and they took Bentley to Miles Hospital. The doctor couldn't get Bentley stable and I almost lost him twice. They called Lifelight and they came and took him to Maine Medical. When we got to Portland, they were setting him up in his room. The Lifelight people told me he was stable and was going to be fine.

I was completely unprepared for this event to happen. I didn't have any clothes, activities, bottles, diapers or comforting items for Bentley. I pride myself on being a superb mother but this event left me shaken and not ready for what lay ahead. LIL ZOMBIE'S activity bags with emergency items for moments like this would be perfect.



<http://www.facebook.com/LilZombies>

[lil\\_zombies@yahoo.com](mailto:lil_zombies@yahoo.com)

# Amanda Coley



Amanda with Erica & Donald Jr.

My experience with the Passages program has been completely life changing. I dropped out of school when I was in the eleventh grade because I got pregnant and didn't have a way to school. After a couple of years I heard about Passages from an acquaintance. I was more than thrilled to be able to get back in school. Getting my high school diploma is something that I set as a goal for myself during grade school, and I was determined to get it no matter how long I had to wait.

My first teacher was Janet Larkin. It was extremely hard for me when she told me that she was leaving, because we had grown close and it was easy to talk to her. I am not one to open up to just anyone. She introduced me to her replacement, Heather King, and I was not very cooperative at first. I didn't like the idea of having to get to know someone different; change was not my thing.

Later, down the road, after I got used to Heather's 8 am rise and shine calls, Heather and I grew very close - close enough where today I can stand and tell you that she is like a mother to me: she has seen me through

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some hard times; she has guided me; she has pushed me to achieve the best that I know I can do; she has helped me get my license; she has been there to just talk to me if I need to just let it out. She understands me and, to me, that is huge! I felt like no one would ever understand who I am or where I was coming from, but she did. It wasn't an annoying, "I-know-how-you-feel, blah-blah-blah..." It was sincere, and I am so grateful for that! To me, a relationship with your teacher, your boss, or whomever it may be that you turn to for help, is a huge part of learning. If you can't stand to be around someone, how are you going to learn from her or him?

I didn't exactly love going to workshops at first because I was not interested in sitting in a circle with a bunch of people I didn't know. Then I made friends or I actually knew people who were there. After a while I looked forward to the workshops.

The Passages program gave me hope to succeed! And succeed I did! Heather pushed me, gave me ideas and made this experience for me the best emotional and learning experience I could have ever asked for. I am about to graduate, all thanks to everyone at the Community School. So, thank you everyone for all your help, faith, and guidance to push me forward!

## Learning about My Children *Excerpts from Amanda's Passage Journal*

4-18-12

Had my first meeting about parenting today with Shana and I met Julie. I did paperwork and took two tests. I found out that I needed work in the expectations and empathy categories. Shana gave me a workbook that I get to keep.

4-26-12

I have been learning a lot from my nurturing book. Jr can do a lot of things that the book says is for 18+ months. I have been using some information that I have learned, like children will develop a better vocabulary if you talk to them in full sentences rather than one-word phrases. I didn't know quite a bit

that I have read so far. For example: between the ages of birth to three years is when a child learns his or her vocabulary for later in life, and if the brain is not stimulated enough in certain areas, the cells will just dry up.

4-30-12

Erica is reading to Jr in the kitchen. He was so content listening to her making up little stories to go along with the pictures.

5-2-12

Shana and I discussed how my opinion towards talking to my children about drug use (when the time comes) could actually be encouraging. For example, I believe that if they're going to do it, tell them to do it at home. Shana explained to me that instead of giving them a "go ahead," to teach them how harmful it is to their bodies and to others so that they will make the right decision. So instead of saying, "No, you won't ever do this," or "Do this here," say, "Well, if you did that, then these may be the consequences" – teach, don't tell. We also talked about things that help build up gross motor and fine motor skills. For instance, something I could do to build up Erica's fine motor skills would be to teach her how to cut paper with scissors, and to build up her gross motor skills would be to catch a basketball.

5-4-12

I got Erica a giant painting book so she could practice staying inside the lines. She loves to paint! I was teaching Jr how to stack blocks; I only had to show him once and he was doing it! We spent the whole morning trying to get Jr to say words and play catch. I think the children and I had a good bonding experience and I was teaching them without them knowing it. For bedtime we got out Erica's book Miss Mary Mack and sang it for Jr.

5-8-12

Today Shana and I talked about imaginary friends, keeping kids safe, and about how children become spoiled.

I have been using a lot of what I'm learning with the kids. I have really been working on not yelling as much and trying different techniques to help me and the kids.

5-10-12

Erica and I have been exercising together. It's helped us bond. While we are working out we talk about her feelings. Then we talk about Jr and how she thinks he feels. She is slowly adapting to new things. We have started this technique Shana told me about. If I am busy and Erica needs my attention she just puts her hand on my arm "silently" and I put my hand on hers so that she knows that I know that she is there and when I am finished talking I will talk with her. It's working great.

5-13-12



Erica was doing a wonderful demonstration of how to blow a bubble.

5-15-12

Well this chick just finished her parenting class!!!

5-20-12

RULE CHART!

Erica is making her rule chart today; we chose our first rule to be: *Take one toy out, play with it, put my toy back to get a sticker, then I can play with a new one.* Her first goal was 10 stickers.

The rule chart thing Shana helped me on a little bit. She gave me ideas to help me teach

Erica instead of making Erica obey me. And now I don't have to clean the living room 5,000,000 times a day, and Erica doesn't have to be stressed out about cleaning up a big mess of toys.

I have been letting Erica help out with chores lately. She says she loves to help me because it makes her feel like a big kid. She didn't really like how heavy the vacuum was, but

she did the whole living room and was so proud of herself! She got her first star today on her rule chart. She finally made her goal of 10 stickers. For her reward she wanted her own pack of gum.



5-26-12

Erica has decided that she wants more than one rule on her rule chart. Every time she does something that she knows is a rule (even though it's not the one we are focusing on) she wants a sticker. We made a second rule chart. It has 4 rules on it.

- 1) Take one toy out, play, put it back.
- 2) Shut off T.V when you're not watching it.
- 3) Cover your mouth when you cough.
- 4) Keep things away from the edge of the table.

Erica chose these rules all by herself for her chart.

5-28-12

Erica has been doing great with our hand technique I learned from Shana. In this picture I was talking to Jason and she came up and put her hand on mine, turns out just to tell me that she loves me, but waited patiently until I was done talking. I told Jason to take a picture of it because I am so proud of her progress and I wanted it in my journal!



5-29-12

Tomorrow will be Erica's fourth birthday! She is going to be four years old. It seems just unreal how much time has gone by. She has grown so much in the past year alone. With all the struggles of losing family members to moving clear out of state, she has had a lot of rough patches, some that I still don't understand, but she has pulled through like a trooper. I am so very proud of her!

This parenting class that I took has been amazing for not just me, but for my family. I have learned so much about how to better handle myself and others. I learned what positive and negative self-worth is and what empathy is. I feel like my kids are happier now that there isn't yelling in the house. I know Erica has enjoyed the new techniques I have learned. I thought I knew all I needed to raise a kid, but I was wrong.

I think the biggest struggle I had during my Passage was changing who I was. It takes a lot to be able to wake up in the morning and completely change your attitude towards the whole world. I did it! I am a better person because of it.

I chose to do the parenting class because I thought it would help me better understand my child. I learned ways to help me focus on how my children are feeling; why they do the things they do. I still don't have any idea why Erica says or does some of the things she does, but I was able to rebuild that bond that I used to have with her. She comes and talks to me about stuff and her feelings, and she wants to spend as much time with me as she can. I am definitely more than happy I took this class! Just because you think you are an amazing parent doesn't mean there isn't plenty of room to learn more about it.