



COSTARS
BY THE CHILDREN'S HOME



Cheryl Johnson (l), Quinntez Johnson, and Shinia Johnson are clients in Every Child Succeeds, a Children's Home partner program. ECS is a home visitation service for vulnerable parents to ensure an optimal start in life for their children. The program also helps foster the social, emotional wellness of children and their parents.

Hanging out with friends. Malls. Sleepovers. Movies. All activities one might associate with a typical American 14-year-old girl.

Now add in "expectant mother."

Those are the circumstances in 2018 that led then 14-year-old Shinia Johnson, and her mom, Cheryl Johnson, wondering where to turn for help.

"I wouldn't say it's been easy," said Shinia, now a high school sophomore and mom of a nearly 3-year-old toddler named Quinntez.

Shinia said baths, feeding and caring for her son, on top of navigating high school, is exhausting. But, she said, it would be even harder without the support of her mom and Maggie Williams, family development supervisor with The Children's Home.

Williams works with the Every Child Succeeds program. ECS is one of several community initiatives the Children's Home works within that's designed to foster the social emotional wellness of children and their parents.

"Shinia was young, pregnant, and I wasn't for sure what we would do," says Cheryl Johnson, Shinia's mother. "But a school counselor knew about [The Children's Home] and set up our first meeting with Maggie."

"I first started working with Shinia early in her pregnancy and her son is now 2 ½ years old and due to graduate from the ECS program when he turns 3 in September," said Williams. "Our home visitation services are perfect for young mom's like Shinia. We help ensure family resilience and well-position our parents to meet the growing needs of their children."

Cheryl said she knows being a parent is stressful enough and factoring in her daughter's young age compounded the stress.

"I know my daughter and I think she would've become depressed," said Cheryl. "I wouldn't have been able to reach her. She would've shut down a lot."

Cheryl said Williams' impact on her young daughter was immediate, especially during the transition of "expectant mom" to "parent."

"Maggie set Shinia up with a support group for young moms," said Cheryl. "She did all of the paperwork to make sure Shinia got the help she needed, became a tutor and counselor for my daughter, and gave her all the tools to go from being an expectant mother to being a mother."

This assistance included pampers from fellow community partners at the Sweet Cheeks Diaper Bank program, clothing, safety items for their residence, as well as a strong, evidence-based curriculum to provide an optimal start in education and learning opportunities for her young son in his first three years. As Quinntez grew, so did the family's relationship with Williams.

"[Maggie] is very helpful," Shinia said. "She's been there to help with a lot of things and gave [me] some helpful tools for each stage of his growth." Shinia said her immediate plans are to stay in school, graduate, and enter the workforce so she can independently care for her son. "It's not easy - it's tough," she said. "But it would be tougher without my mom or Mrs. Maggie." Her mom agrees.

"Shinia is in school and I wouldn't have it any other way," said Cheryl. "She has the support of her mom and I'll ensure she has the tools to be successful." Cheryl said she's also grateful she has an ally in Maggie Williams.

"[She is] wonderful, wonderful, wonderful," Cheryl said. "Maggie is like a big sister to Shinia. "She wouldn't have been as successful as she has been without Maggie."

Cheryl and Shinia said help for young families who need it is available in the Greater Cincinnati area.

"We've had a really rough journey, but we've had Maggie's help and a lot of support from families and friends," she said. "I would want other parents to know to reach out for these programs because help is out there," said Cheryl.

Learn more about The Children's Home at www.tchcincy.org.



Maggie Williams (r) is a family development supervisor with The Children's Home and Shinia's case worker. Maggie is proud of the progress Shinia, Cheryl and Quinntez are making and says she is looking forward to the milestone when Quinntez turns 3 in the fall and graduates from ECS.