



Dear Friends,

If you only knew the pain a mother feels being separated from her child. My mother tried to take care of me, but she could not give me a stable home. At age 14, I was removed from her care and placed with my aunt, but this didn't last. When I was 15, I gave birth to my son, and my aunt wouldn't let me stay with her anymore. My sister tried to advocate for me, but I was deemed a runaway, and the Department of Job and Family Services stepped in.

My son was placed in foster care, and I was sent to Lighthouse's New Beginnings. Little did I know then how much I would benefit from my time there. New Beginnings provided a safe haven for me. The staff and other girls became like my family. We worked together to make meals and do chores around the home. Our home manager, LT, helped me accomplish things like a parent normally would, like getting my driver's license. Although I never felt comfortable sharing in group therapy sessions, I often connected individually with other girls who had similar experiences. I met my best friend while in the program, and we are still very close to this day.

While at New Beginnings, my goal was always to reunite with my son. My effort involved some legal battles, including arguing to allow him to live with either my aunt or older brother. But I never faltered, and my New Beginnings family always offered support. I went to school and worked two jobs to earn enough money to support myself and my son when we were reunited. I completed parenting classes and passed drug tests. After two years, we were finally together again. I'll never forget the joy I felt celebrating Christmas with him for the first time in our own apartment.

I'm now 21, and I am doing well while taking care of myself and my two children. I hope to finish school soon, and I currently operate a clothing and hair business from my home. Eventually, I would like to work in a group home or similar program and serve as a mentor for girls like me.

New Beginnings provides girls with a safe and supportive environment they need to heal and grow. I hope you'll support the new facility so many more girls can find the security and support they desperately need.

Sincerely,

Chelsea
Former New Beginnings Resident