

## THEN & NOW

Can you imagine having to defend yourself as your father attacks you with a weapon, and then having to file a police report against him? Walkabout resident, twenty year-old Shawna\* has grown up in such a world where violence was a routine part of her everyday life. Not only has Shawna been exposed to domestic violence, but she was also taught to accept the abuse because of her cultural background. Knowing in her heart that she could no longer be in such a dangerous living situation, she made a decision to escape.

She found herself living on a bench at the community park, a Laundromat and then at a friend's house. Being a very spiritual and religious individual, Shawna believes that she was destined to find safety with Family & Children's, first at Nassau Haven and later at the Walkabout residence. Throughout her stay with us, she has received medical insurance, opened a bank account, learned money management, maintained employment for over a year and enrolled in Nassau County Community College.

Shawna has a passion for fashion; she plans on becoming a fashion designer one day and will then have the opportunity to share her character and talent with the rest of the world. In addition to taking charge of her own safety, Shawna is also looking out for her younger brother; constantly researching different living programs that would meet his needs. This added responsibility combined with her personal experiences had led to issues with anxiety. This anxiety becomes so powerful at times that she finds herself in the emergency room with symptoms of an anxiety attack.

Our staff has had the privilege of meeting and working with this brave young woman. Shawna has added such positive energy to the entire program and is an inspiration to many of her fellow residents; she is constantly smiling and helping others build their confidence within themselves. Shawna is yet another example of how an individual does not allow their past to dictate their future. She is an extraordinary person who has so much more to give, to do, to experience, and now she has the ability to do so with the support and security from Family & Children's.

\*Names and photos have been changed to protect client confidentiality.