

# MOM KEELAH

**Keelah knew she wanted to be a mother. But she wanted her baby's childhood to be different than hers had been, having grown up with a mother who used drugs.**

"I knew I couldn't expect a lot of support from my family. I was going to be on my own with my children, and I wanted to be the best mom I could be," said Keelah.

A viable pregnancy was Keelah's first challenge. With four pregnancies ending in miscarriage before the age of 30, it didn't seem like a baby was in the cards. So she was overjoyed to learn she was carrying a healthy baby at the age of 31.

Keelah had heard of Nurse-Family Partnership® (NFP) through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). It sounded like something that might be able to help her with pregnancy, and after the baby's birth, it provided important help, guidance and support that she wasn't able to get from her own family.

Shortly after she reached out, Keelah was linked with nurse Rashawnda, who worked for Nurse-Family Partnership at the Alameda County Public Health Department.



Keelah became the best mom to her daughter, MaKaylah. With her nurse's support, she was able to face a challenging pregnancy and her daughter's unexpected medical issues.\*



Nurse-Family Partnership helped put Keelah on a path towards self-sufficiency. Keelah started her own business, and is saving to finish her college degree.\*

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"Rashawnda came with me to my appointments so I wouldn't be by myself, and even provided CPR training," said Keelah. "But she helped with far more than medical care. For example, she even helped me get a decent car seat, and taught me how to set it up."

Since Keelah was on her own with the pregnancy, nurse Rashawnda accompanied her to appointments such as the ultrasound, helping to translate complex medical terminology so that Keelah would understand what they were finding. Rashawnda was also instrumental with other aspects of helping Keelah feel comfortable and supported throughout her pregnancy – such as helping her load up a truck at WalMart to take her new crib home and demonstrating to her how to assemble it correctly. Keelah still

recalls the emphasis her nurse put on knowing her ABCs when it came to baby crib use – “Alone, on their Backs, in the Crib.”

“The thing that really stuck with me was that nurse Rashawnda was willing to meet you where you were at,” she said.

Keelah had four previous miscarriages – which gave information to nurse Rashawnda to be vigilant in assessing for danger signs of pregnancy, including cramping, bleeding and swelling. Their partnership paid off — Keelah gave birth to a beautiful daughter, whom she named MaKaylah.

Rashawnda was also instrumental in helping Keelah address some unanticipated issues.

“MaKaylah was born with a medical condition (laryngomalacia) where tissue can fall over and partially block the airway. Luckily, MaKaylah’s case was not severe, but it was really hard for her to latch on for feeding,” Keelah said.

Through Rashawnda, NFP linked Keelah with a lactation consultant who worked closely with her on a care and feeding plan to ensure the baby was safe and receiving enough nutrition to grow.

Rashawnda also kept a watchful eye on Medical benefits and eligibility. Because NFP takes babies’ measurements and weight when they visit, Rashawnda was able to resolve a processing issue when the doctor’s office forgot to take and log the baby’s vitals.

An important part of Keelah’s progress was her journey toward self-sufficiency – one of the main goals of NFP.

“I’d been working as a temporary housekeeper when I began with Nurse-Family Partnership. Rashawnda helped me to focus on next steps, like setting goals for myself,” Keelah recalled. She decided to pursue something she had always wanted: her own

house cleaning business.

“Nurse-Family Partnership linked me to Financial Pathways, which set me up with business cards and granted me \$700 in gift cards to begin my own business,” Keelah said, still marveling that the support jump-started her success.

“I’ve had 22 clients over the past year, with around 7-11 clients per month. Usually my clients are older folks that can’t clean up for themselves anymore. I feel good about being able to support them, because I know what it’s like to need extra help.”

With the help of Rashawnda and NFP, Keelah and MaKaylah are stable and doing well. Keelah now works two jobs (her own business and at an auto auction) and is saving to finish her college degree (she currently has an Associate in Arts degree in business tech and wants to pursue her Bachelor’s degree in Health Science). MaKaylah, now three years old, just started preschool.

“I appreciate that Nurse-Family Partnership meets you where you are and works with you on YOUR goals, which is so important,” Keelah said.



MaKaylah, Keelah’s daughter, is now 3 years old and just started preschool.\*

\*Photo credit: Hasain Rasheed Photography