

# MOM ATHENA

**Tobi, Athena's 6-year-old son, sits beside her on the sofa watching her homework videos and dreaming of being a scientist just like his mom. She's studying astrophysics and someday wants to work for NASA.**

She'd also like to take Tobi to live in Chile because it has one of the biggest telescopes in the world.

The two have come a long way since she got pregnant and dropped out of school at 15.

"It definitely was scary," said Athena, now 22 and living in Tempe, Ariz. "I didn't know what to expect or how to handle it. I wasn't planning to get pregnant, that's for sure."

One key factor in her success is her relationship with Catrina, a nurse with Nurse-Family Partnership ® (NFP) at the Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

"I felt embarrassed when I got pregnant," Athena said. "It's such a hard situation when you're so young. You get so much judgment from people."

And though her mom was caring and supportive, Athena said, "It's nice to have someone in your life who isn't family and isn't judgmental. Nurse Catrina



Tobi is now in first grade and loves it. He is obsessed with karate and already has been to six countries!

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never made me feel like getting pregnant was a bad thing.”

She was just there to help.

“A lot of times, doctors and nurses don't see the person and how she really lives behind those doors,” Catrina said. “When you're privy to that and have an opportunity to become a mentor and a friend, you're the keeper of the promise. There are women out there who never hear a positive thing about themselves as mothers, so it's really important to say, ‘Congratulations. Wow, you're doing a great job.’”

Right from the start, having a nurse was crucial for Athena.

She had surgery to remove her gallbladder and, a week later, learned that she was two months pregnant, a situation that was understandably unnerving. Her mom saw some information about Nurse-Family Partnership in a doctor's office and suggested Athena make the call.

Nurse Catrina provided information and advice that helped her cope with the situation.

Later in the pregnancy, Athena started vomiting and her feet and legs swelled severely. Her doctor offered little advice and Athena felt like she wasn't being heard.

“Nurse Catrina gave me the push I needed to switch doctors,” Athena said.

The new doctor immediately diagnosed Athena with indications of preeclampsia, began monitoring her closely and decided for her safety to induce labor at 38 weeks.

“Athena was so upset about the care she was getting, so I suggested she get a second opinion,” said Catrina. “Then, even though it was late in her pregnancy, she decided to switch doctors. She was brave and we all were so happy with the outcome.”

Tobi was 8 pounds, 9 ounces at birth and “super healthy,” Athena said. Nurse Catrina provided instruction and activities for Athena to help her nurture Tobi’s growth and development.

“He hit all his developmental milestones on time,” she said.

Nurse Catrina helped Athena get Tobi coverage under the Arizona Children’s Health Insurance Program. She helped her find low-cost baby clothes, a breast pump and other gear, and taught her how to do baby massage.

“I’d never heard about baby massage,” Athena said, “but nurse Catrina gave me a whole class on it. It helps a lot.”

Once Athena was comfortable with her new routine as a mom, Catrina helped her access online programs so she could finish high school.

“My mom is definitely my rock and one of my best friends,” Athena said, “but I made her a grandmother when she was in her 30s. She was working, so nurse Catrina helped me with everything. Sure, you can find a million answers on Google, but you never know which one works. It would have been really hard for me without her.”

Catrina also gave Athena the freedom to think about herself.

“I got married when I was 17 and I was so focused on growing up so fast that I didn’t have time to focus on myself,” she said.



NFP nurse Catrina believes in Athena and her goals to finish school and to “... accomplish anything she sets her heart to achieve.”

Athena is separated from her husband – Tobi’s dad – who is in the military and deployed overseas.

Now, as she studies at Coconino Community College and makes plans to transfer to Arizona State University next year, she is working hard to carve an ambitious path as a woman and a mother.

Tobi is a tall, skinny first-grader who loves school, is obsessed with karate and already has passport stamps from Cyprus, China, Korea, Turkey, Norway and United Kingdom. “He’s been on 28 plane trips and he’s a perfect travel buddy,” Athena said.

Catrina has great confidence in the determined young mom. “When I met her and she was only 15, I remember thinking, ‘Wow, she’s an amazing person. I don’t think she realizes how much she has accomplished.’ ”

Her plans for the future are serious, not just starry-eyed dreaming, Catrina said.

“A lot of people have underestimated her in her life. She’s a brave and determined young woman. I do believe she’ll accomplish anything she sets her heart to achieve.”