

DAD MARVIN

Marvin knew nothing about babies before his son Matthew was born last November.

"I didn't have any experience at all and I'm really young," said the guy who turns 18 on the day before he will celebrate his first Father's Day. "Now I'm just happy to be a dad. There's no one I love more than my kid."

Marvin and his girlfriend, Luisa, were apprehensive when they had their first meeting with their Nurse-Family Partnership® nurse a year ago. Their parents, though supportive, were less than thrilled when they told them a baby was coming. The teens wondered if they'd be made to feel ashamed.

"I expected someone a little more strict, maybe someone I really wouldn't want to be around," Marvin said. "But she turned out to be extremely friendly and it was a good experience to have her around."

"It was way better than I expected."

Nurse Adriana works at Nurse-Family Partnership at VNA of Central Jersey, covering Monmouth County, N.J. She said Marvin is "strikingly" mature for his age.



Marvin wants to show his son, Matthew, that he can succeed. Marvin plans to go to college next fall.

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"He participates actively in caring for the baby. He has been a part of most home visits, asks good questions, is really supportive and engages very well with his child."

Like most first-time parents, Marvin and Luisa expressed a lot of anxiety about facing pregnancy and all the changes ahead in their lives.

"There were so many unknowns," Adriana said. "I helped them work through them, answering questions and connecting them to resources."

Marvin said she was "really nice" and generous with her time.

"She would ask me if I had any questions and no matter how many I had, she answered them all. It was so comforting."

Adriana talked about what would happen during pregnancy, labor and delivery, which helped allay many of their early fears. Then, when Matthew was born, Marvin said she taught them how to bathe and care for him, and how to encourage him toward all the developmental milestones in those critical first months of life.

Both Marvin and Luisa have worked hard to juggle caring for Matthew and finishing high school. And Luisa appreciates their authentic partnership.

"Apart from being a huge help, Marvin loves Matthew," she said. "He plays with him, reads to him and keeps him entertained."



Teen parents, Luisa and Marvin, continue to celebrate important milestones together – from the birth of their child to graduating high school.

Both of the teen parents were committed to finishing high school, Adriana said.

“It was a little challenging in the beginning, especially for Luisa who had a lot of anxiety. But I encouraged her and reminded her of the benefits of graduating. She also sought the help from her school counselor, and now they are both proud of their accomplishments.”

They graduated this month from Project TEACH, a high school that provides childcare for teen parents near their home in Freehold, N.J.

Until the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in stay-at-home orders, they also had part-time jobs.

Before the pandemic, they would hustle to get Matthew ready and catch the bus to get to school each morning, then after classes, they would hurry off to work and tag-team childcare.

“I hope to save enough money to get an apartment for Luisa and me and Matthew,” said Marvin, who in the meantime lives with Luisa and her parents.

Both of them plan to attend college in the fall.

Marvin said he would like to study mechanics at a community college in White Plains and eventually would like to go to school to become a dentist.

“I want to go to college to show Matthew that even though we had him when we were so young, I still did what I needed to do,” he said. “I want to succeed to show him that he can succeed in the same way.”

Adriana described Marvin as “respectful, engaged and inquisitive.”

And, she said, he’s also fun.

“We do our meetings by video call now because of the coronavirus and in the background I can hear Marvin playing with Matthew and he’s cooing and laughing. He’s a kind, supportive, proud dad.”

While Marvin admits that being a dad is a big responsibility and a lot of work, he clearly relishes the challenge.

“Being a father is definitely an experience I enjoy,” he said.

Luisa said that’s obvious.

“Marvin is a wonderful dad. He enjoys his time with him and the amount of love he shows to him is amazing. It’s nice as a mother to see my partner and my son bond so well.”

Marvin said he celebrates each new stage with his son.

“Matthew really is getting more active all the time. He takes me on an adventure every day.”



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