

MOM SHELBY

When asked to describe her son, recent Nurse-Family Partnership® graduate, Shelby, smiles, “Dominik is super social and empathetic for being 2-and-a-half years old. He knows all his colors and shapes, and he loves monsters!”

Shelby’s relief at how well-adjusted Dominik is at this age didn’t come easily, though. She and her live-in partner planned their pregnancy, but once she became pregnant in early 2019, their relationship took a turn. “My partner would become intoxicated and violent. He would often threaten me,” Shelby painfully recounts.

Shelby first learned about Maricopa County Department of Public Health’s Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program in Phoenix, AZ when she had her first ultrasound. She said, “I was uninsured and they handed me a paper about NFP that said a nurse could come over and help me learn about motherhood. I thought, this sounds great – let’s do it!”



NFP mom, Shelby, and her son, Dominik, graduated from NFP in Phoenix, AZ in March 2022.

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In March 2019, NFP nurse Carrie first met with Shelby at her townhouse. Shelby remembers, “Nurse Carrie came in with her wheelie suitcase full of supplies and information. She told me not to worry about being a new mom – that she would support me. I truly credit how good of a mother I am because of her.”

Nurse Carrie remembers her first impression of Shelby, “She is lovely and always open and receptive to the NFP program and my visits. She has tenacity and grace and took the challenges and faced them head on. Shelby took all the information and support I gave her and went full steam ahead.”

Shelby had a smooth pregnancy and went into labor in December 2019. While it was a long labor and difficulty with the epidural, Dominik was born healthy. “During my home visits, I wanted Carrie to tell me everything about breastfeeding. Once he was born, I used all the tips she gave me and had no issues breastfeeding at all – it was such a relief!” said Shelby.

But once Shelby brought their new baby home, difficulties with her boyfriend escalated. She said, “The first few months were chaotic.” By the time Dominik was 3 months old, Shelby’s best friend pleaded for her to get away from her partner, for the sake of her life.



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During this time, nurse Carrie was continuing to visit Shelby and her new baby. Shelby said, “I didn’t want to tell her about the violence at first. I was embarrassed. But I finally confessed to her.” Nurse Carrie remembers, “When she shared her situation with me, she was ready to do what she needed to do to keep her and her son safe.”

Right away, Carrie referred Shelby to a psychiatrist where she was diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety. Shelby shared, “I felt so hopeless and if Carrie didn’t help me with the resources, I don’t know what would have happened.” Shelby implemented a restraining order against her partner and hasn’t spoken to him since.

Next, Shelby faced the challenges of moving homes and changing jobs as a new single mother. She also transitioned to virtual visits with Carrie as the COVID-19 pandemic was in full swing.

“After the pandemic, and moving, everything was finally coming along,” Shelby said about September 2021. “Then – BAM – I go to concert and reconnect with Rene!” Rene is a high school friend Shelby hadn’t seen in 10 years. They began dating and by Thanksgiving, Dominik identified Rene as his dad. “Rene knows all about nurse Carrie. In fact, he told me what attracted him to me is what a good mom I am.”

Shelby graduated from Nurse-Family Partnership in March 2022. Carrie remembers, “At the graduation visit, Dominik was so sweet and responsive. You can tell he gained those skills through Shelby’s interactions with him.”



NFP mom, Shelby, and her boyfriend, Rene, are getting married in 2023.

Looking back, Shelby said, “I absolutely know my experience as a first-time mom would have been different without nurse Carrie. Connecting with her is the best thing that ever happened to me and Dom.”

Then Shelby moved north of Phoenix with Rene. “I was going back to work and needed to find care for Dominik, that is how Carrie connected me with Early Head Start,” said Shelby. Carrie agrees, “I want to make sure my clients have Early Head Start resources lined up when they leave the program.”

“That’s why NFP is so awesome, Dominik is more advanced because of Carrie’s Early Head Start referral. Every family should get the advantage of having an NFP nurse for their new baby,” Shelby said.

Nurse Carrie smiles, “The best part of my job is supporting each mom through their discovery of ‘who am I now?’” That is what Shelby is most looking forward to as she and Rene are getting married in 2023 and he plans to legally adopt Dominik. Shelby said, “He has taken my son as his own – along with his two daughters – we are an amazing blended family!”

Photo credit: Carrie Magnuson Photography