

PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE



NFP parent panelists spoke about how they used technology and social media as new parents at the National Symposium.



NFP parent, Aleena, said during the panel, “Facebook ‘buy nothing’ groups was a good way to connect with neighboring moms.”



NFP parents, Katelin (left, holding daughter Alani) and Aleena (right) were paired with the same nurse, Kiesha (middle) from Public Health Seattle and King County NFP.

What’s it like being a new parent in 2023? In a post-COVID world, parenting in the U.S. has become more “digital” as influenced by improvements in technology – including remote working options, telehealth doctor visits, remote learning possibilities and finding support in online social communities.

Nurse-Family Partnership® (NFP) nurses and Child First clinicians learned first-hand what it’s like to be a new parent in 2023 at this year’s National Symposium, the National Service Office’s annual education summit. This year’s National Symposium was held in Seattle, Washington where nearly 800 NFP and Child First leaders from across the country attended for professional development.

The National Symposium featured a parent panel session that highlighted four parents from the Seattle area who enrolled in NFP. During the panel, they shared their experiences on how they parent with the increased use of technology in their daily lives.

Ashlei Watson, Volunteer Engagement Manager at the National Service Office, served as moderator and introduced the parent panel at the Symposium, “Raising Strong is a national alumni group comprised of

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3,300 NFP parents across the country. These parents are living testimony of the program.”

Aleena, age 27, spoke on the parent panel. They said, “I love art and am excited to do that with my kiddo, who is 12 months old.” Another NFP parent, Katelin, is 21 years old and spoke on the panel about her 17-month-old daughter, “We are best friends,” she gushed.

Aleena and Katelin both enrolled in the Public Health Seattle and King County Nurse-Family Partnership and were paired with the same nurse, Kiesha. Aleena shared, “I enrolled in NFP because I didn’t have family in Seattle when I was pregnant and didn’t feel like I had a support system. Because of Kiesha I had at least one person who believed in me.”

Katelin recalled why she signed up for NFP, “I was young with an unplanned pregnancy. This program gave me an extra support system and an outside person I could talk to about anything. I recommend NFP to all new parents.”

Moderator Ashlei asked each panelist how they most used technology and social media during their pregnancy and beyond. “I used a baby tracker app to see how big the baby should be getting each week – the app told me what size fruit she was similar in size to,” Katelin said and the crowd chuckled.

Aleena explained how they used Facebook as a tool, “I joined a Facebook group of doulas who shared ‘buy nothing’ Facebook groups and through these posts I was able to get everything I needed for the first several months of my kiddo’s life.” Aleena added, “The Facebook ‘buy nothing’ groups was a good way to connect with neighboring moms to feel less alone.”

Katelin said, “I have a private page on Instagram where I keep videos and photos of my daughter’s milestones, it’s like a personal diary. I am not a scrapbook kind of gal, so posting it digitally is easier for me to recall and access.”

Next, Ashlei asked the parent panel how they have used technology in conjunction with their NFP nurse. Aleena answered, “Instead of relying on just Google for health answers, I asked my NFP nurse if my concerns and symptoms were valid. My kiddo had trouble gaining weight and I was able to use an app to track feedings and diaper changes, then I informed my NFP nurse instantly.”

Katelin added, “The option of telehealth visits with my nurse was helpful to me. I have social anxiety so meeting people in person can be scary for me.”

The panel answered how they navigate raising their children alongside the abundant availability of technology. Katelin said, “I try to find ways to encourage my daughter to play with things that don’t require a screen. I limit screen time... but she does enjoy watching Ms. Rachel!” which came with applause from the audience.



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Aleena spoke about raising their child genderless. “My NFP nurse is fantastic because she has been on top of acknowledging pronouns and understanding that I am trying to provide the best options so that my kiddo doesn’t feel like an outcast.”

Ashlei asked the final question, “What advice can you offer to the NFP nurses in the audience?” Aleena answered, “Be open minded. We can’t even list all the ways technology can help us be better parents now.”

Aleena finished by saying, “Katelin and I had the same nurse, who was absolutely wonderful. She believed in me from day one and I am very grateful to the NFP program.” Then they said to the audience, “Please give yourselves a pat on the back for being an NFP nurse!”