

Latasha Williamson: Proud Daughter and Proud Mommy

At age 33, Latasha Williamson was the last child in her family to get a high school diploma. Her three siblings graduated on time. She made up for it by getting a college degree.

Latasha grew up in Logan with a single mother who worked hard to provide for the family. She dropped out of school at an early age and had her first child when she was 17. While caring for her child she worked at Taco Bell and was promoted to shift manager. Two years later she had another child. "If I had listened to my mom I would have had it easy. I've been on my own since I was 17 years old," she said.

Latasha now has four children, ages 19, 17, 9 and 7. "I wanted to get a high school diploma to show my children that education is the key to a successful life. I wanted it for myself and for my kids."

She enrolled at Center for Literacy (CFL) in 2011. While at CFL she worked the night shift for Hess as a cashier in gas stations in North Philadelphia. It was difficult for her to get up in the morning and go to classes. "I was going to quit many times, but Mr. Mark [teacher Mark Edmonds] never gave up on me. He convinced me to return to class and welcomed me each time I returned with open arms," she remembered with tears in her eyes.

Latasha failed the GED® writing test the first time, but with Mark's help she passed it the second time. With renewed confidence, she applied for admission to Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) two days before she took her last GED® test in math. "I was determined to go to college. When those scores came in the mail showing that I got my GED® I was jumping up and down. I ran to enroll at CCP and to get my roster," she said. She received her associate degree in criminal justice from CCP, with honors, on May 7, 2016.

Since she was a teenager, Latasha always wanted to be a parole officer and realized that she needs a bachelor's degree to become one. She began classes at Alvernia University-Philadelphia Center, in Elkins Park, on August 22, 2016, and is now working toward a degree in criminal justice with a minor in social work.

While pursuing her education, Latasha always maintained steady employment. She works as a direct support staff in a group home in Willow Grove and has a new part-time job as a therapeutic support staff at Mastery Charter School John Wister Elementary in Germantown.

Recently, when she was leaving her house with her seven-year-old daughter, a neighbor asked how she was doing. Latasha Williamson, Jr. piped up before she could say anything and proudly said, "My mommy graduated from college and she is working two jobs and she is in school too." Proud daughter and proud mommy!

Latasha was the keynote speaker at our September 14 fundraiser.

Photo: Latasha Williamson with children and instructor Mark Edmonds.

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