

Keyona Walton



Keyona Walton has close ties to her family. She is one of four children who were raised by a single mother along with extended family members, her aunt, uncle and grandmother. Although they grew up poor, she describes her childhood as happy. "There was always food on the table, my Mom made it work," said Keyona.

Keyona feels a strong connection with her twin sister. About this relationship, Keyona said, "We can't be that far away from each other." In spite of the fact that they have very different personalities, their lives have followed similar paths.

At the age of 16, Keyona and her boyfriend moved in together. She managed to keep her grades up and graduated from high school, but at the time of her graduation, Keyona was pregnant. Soon after, she delivered a healthy baby girl. Eventually, her daughter's father was not involved in their

lives anymore, Keyona was on her own. She worked at a large local department store for three years. She admits she made a mistake one day which cost her dearly and as a result, she lost her job. This was the beginning of a downward spiral for Keyona.

With no job on the horizon, Keyona decided to try cosmetology school. She said she always wanted to do this and help people look their best. She loved it and learned a lot. However, she wasn't able to finish because it cost too much and she couldn't pay the \$5,000 balance she owed the school.

Keyona stated, "I couldn't return to Mom's house. I didn't know what to do. My daughter's father couldn't help." From here she had no choice but to go on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Keyona heard about SCAP from her mother. She liked the idea of helping people so in September she was accepted into SCAP's Healthcare Professional Opportunity Grants program and completed her training to become a C.N.A.

Keyona realizes she must stay focused to give her and her daughter a new life. "I don't have a job yet, but I am searching every week for work. Now, I have job references; that is something I didn't have before." Keyona said. "This experience has changed me. I have a more positive outlook and goals for the future to one day become an RN. I like the hands-on experience. Maybe even one day I will finish cosmetology school and do hair and makeup again. I want to get back to how I was, proud of taking care of myself and my daughter."

She has a dream to one day move south because it's warm and the people are friendly and polite. Kenya said, "If everyone was honest, there wouldn't be so much drama in the world."