

Katherine Cohn-Jacqueway



Katherine was raised in Schenectady's Mt. Pleasant neighborhood in a large family with five children. Growing up, she said her parents were very strict and passed along strong moral beliefs. They were poor, but she felt she was provided them with a loving and strong family structure and values. Her father always worked at least two jobs and her mother worked as well. She had a large extended family and learned at a young age the importance of family.

Katherine did well in school. But, once she entered middle school, her grades went down. She said this was due to peer pressure.

As a teenager, Katherine became pregnant and had to finish high school from home through online schooling with help from a mentoring program for pregnant teens. While finishing school, Katherine cared for her children and worked part-time in a fast food restaurant. By the time she graduated from school, she had two children and was pregnant for her third. She faced a great deal of obstacles and missed opportunities. "It's painful to think about," said Katherine.

After the birth of her third child, Katherine and her boyfriend got married. In spite of the challenges they faced, she had gained a lot of strength from her strict and structured upbringing which helped drive Katherine forward to improve their lives. She worked at a cleaning job at night and by day she volunteered as a mentor for the program that had helped her as a pregnant teen. Also, she took college courses online and earned her Associates Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies and Photography.

Katherine first learned about SCAP when her youngest child was three years old. She enrolled in SCAP's Early Learning home-based program. Katherine witnessed the positive results the program had on her family, and it was through that experience that she developed an interest in working with children. She applied for a job with SCAP and started working as a substitute aide and then became a full-time aide. She enrolled in Child Development Associate classes, which is a nationally recognized credential in the field of early childhood education and earned her certificate within three years.

Today, Katherine is a teacher's assistant at SCAP. In her own words, Katherine said, "I love kids, I always have, and I love teaching and working with children. I can do everything I love in the classroom-- photography, cooking, crafts. I'm not in it for the income; I'm in it for the outcome."

Someday Katherine wants to go back to school for Early Childhood Studies. "Growing up poor has shown me how to raise kids and the difference between needs and wants. My strict upbringing helps me understand the families I work with."

In listening to Katherine talk about her story, it is evident that Katherine values family most. When asked about them, Katherine said that her grandparents, aunts and uncles were involved in her life growing up

and through them she learned family values. She learned strong work ethics from her father, who went to work every day, no matter what.

Katherine feels her best qualities are that she is smart, bold, independent, talented, creative, and a nature lover. She said, "I try everything; I love an adventure." Today, her husband owns his own home-improvement business and Katherine is always looking ahead to the next adventure and setting goals for their future.

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