

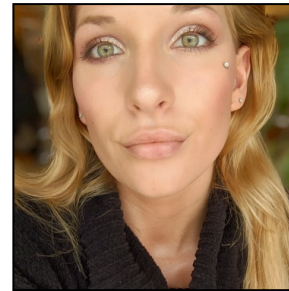
# Passages Press - Graduation 2020



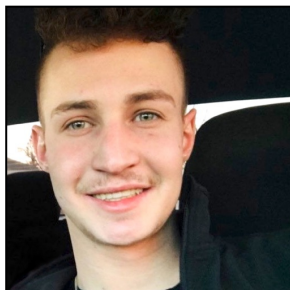
**Sarena  
Bennett**



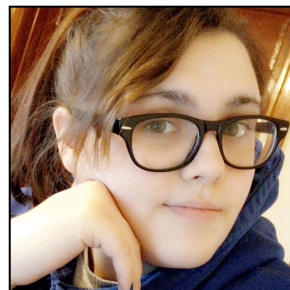
**Haley  
Breton**



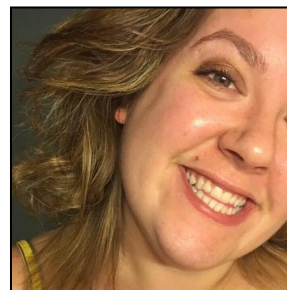
**Chynna  
Chase**



**Devon S.  
Danforth**



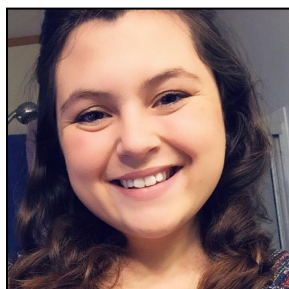
**Candace  
DeJesus**



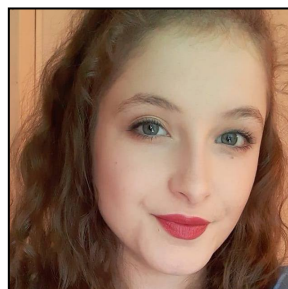
**Savanah Marie  
Doak-Turner**



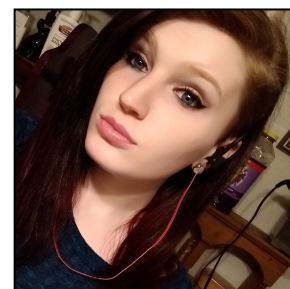
**Elizabeth Elaine  
Hustus**



**Kristina Lee  
Kenney**



**Olivia Rose  
Orff**



**Shelby  
Robinson**

# Sarena Bennett

## *Westbrook*



Here's a little back story on how I decided to enroll in Passages.

When I got pregnant, I wasn't going to school at all and pretty much hated my life and the choices I'd made. I told my guidance counselor that I was dropping out, and she told me she'd heard of the Passages program and that I could go to school, be at home with my child, and work on my own time. I decided to take the offer even though I really didn't want to, but I knew I wanted a better life for my children.

When I first met with Dana and Erica in the library I was scared, discouraged, and just wanted to quit before I'd even started, but they both reassured me that I would be fine. On my first day when I met with Dana, it was scary, and I felt stupid because before that I'd been missing school for years.

My first year in Passages was probably the hardest for me because I was a new mom and wanted a better life for my children and that was giving me so much anxiety that I missed a lot of days with Dana.

At one point I had to take a month break from school. I had a lot of stuff going on in my personal life and couldn't take the pressure of

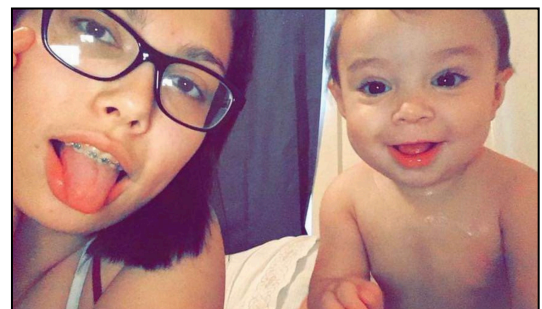
meeting with anyone at all. I needed to be alone. After that month off, I still wasn't trying my hardest and I wanted to drop out. Then it was summer break and the people who I went to school with graduated. I felt happy for them but sad that I wasn't graduating with them.

During my second year in Passages, I knew I wanted to graduate, and I was motivated to do it, but I was still working slowly and had a lot of anxiety. I was afraid that I would let myself down. Then I got pregnant again and I knew I wouldn't have a lot of time left to do my schoolwork.

My pregnancies were hard on me, but I knew I had to do my schoolwork before Carter got here. I stopped overthinking and started to surprise myself by how fast I was getting work turned in. Dana helped with everything and never judged me.

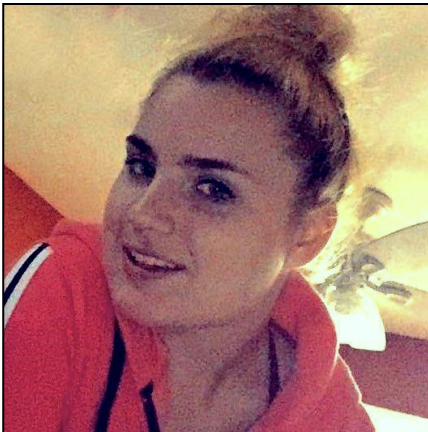
When I started getting my schoolwork done faster, I was excited and became even more motivated. I finally wasn't scared about letting myself or my family down.

Now I am graduating with practically all A's, and I couldn't be happier or prouder of myself than I am now. I wouldn't be here without my teacher Dana. She has helped me more than she will ever know. I still can't believe I am going to graduate. Passages has saved me from going down the wrong path and I am forever grateful for that.



## Haley Breton

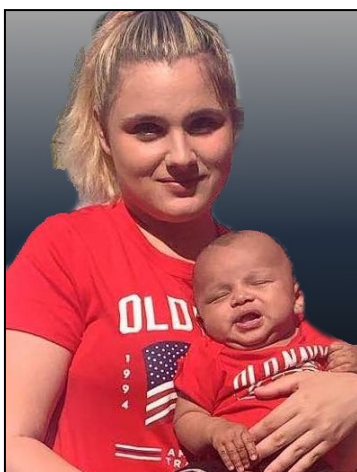
*Lewiston*



My journey through Passages has been alright. I still kind of wish that I went to Adult Ed. and got my diploma last year, and graduated when I was supposed to, but it is what it is.

I liked that I was able to do it at my own pace, and it was all online besides the one day a week when I would meet with Julia, my teacher.

I'm excited to get my diploma as soon as possible so I can move on with life. I hope the best for my teacher and all the support people who helped me through hard times.



## Chynna Chase

*Bath*



Wayfinder Passages - It's a once in a lifetime opportunity, and if it's being offered to you, take it, because it'll be the best thing you've

ever done for yourself; I promise.

The unique complexity of Passages is that it is tailored to each individual's needs, personalized just for you, specially adjusted, and grows along with you. Unlike the average school curriculum that you can quickly outgrow, they grow with you and go through what you go through, and if that isn't just the best thing, then I don't know what is.

These guys are not just "*teachers*" they are heroes and real-life miracle workers. They make it happen. No matter what "it" is, they make it happen. They make it work. They make it possible.

Wayfinder turns your dreams and aspirations into real-life and reality. These teachers turn a statistic into a success story. I was only 18 when I got pregnant, and over the last three years, I've had a different teacher for each of those years. I think that is pretty special because I was lucky enough to experience three different types of Wayfinder teachers. I feel like each teacher was perfectly assigned for the phase of life I was in.



# Why is Everett Awesome?

by Chynna Chase

Where do I begin? My flesh and blood, and *forever* my little boy.

He has *a smile* that could melt your ice cold heart.

Eyes so blue they make the ocean & the sky jealous.

A laugh that serenades you. A sound so gentle and sweet it can embrace you like a warm hug.

So Wise beyond his little years. I'm convinced he's lived 100 lives in his past.

My biggest *inspiration* in life.

Everett was the child that *blended* two families together...

turning strangers into family.

Broken bonds were mended when Everett came to us in this world.

I'm not religious, but I'm convinced *God* precisely and carefully made him. He spent countless hours *perfecting this tiny creature*, making sure he was *perfect*, and properly equipped with all the tools he needed to live a full life on earth, to make sure he was ready for me.

But what I didn't know was that Everett didn't need me.....

He didn't need me at all,

*I needed him.*

To think it's only been three years. But I feel like I've known him for a lifetime.

It's almost like the life I lived before Everett didn't really exist. It's almost gone from my memory, mostly because I simply don't like imagining the time in my life when I didn't have him.

The world meant nothing to me back then. It all seems so trivial and small, so unimportant

But, oh has my mind changed

With him, my perspective changed, most importantly I changed. I now know commitment, joy, loyalty, motherhood, and *Love*.

He taught me that Love really is...

*Unconditional*



# Devon S. Danforth

## Swanville



My time in Wayfinder Schools has been life-changing for me. I dropped out of school when I was in the 10th grade. I went back to school for my high school diploma at BCOPE in Belfast and in my 12th grade year I found out I was going to be a dad again. They were having me do four years of school in one school year which was really stressful.

My girlfriend and I went to a WIC appointment and they told us about Passages. My girlfriend said that we should look into it and apply, so that's what we did and we got accepted!

We both dropped out of BCOPE and continued our schooling with Passages. We both got the same teacher, Cathy. She is extremely nice and easy to get along with. Cathy has always worked with me through the difficult times. This is my third year in Passages, and I have learned so much and even gotten my CPR certification.

I learned many everyday life skills along with budgeting, early childhood development, home safety/organization, and more. The Wayfinder School has continued classes through video calls during the pandemic and it makes it

feel as if we are still bonding and doing schooling.

I have bonded with my teacher Cathy throughout the years and I'm very lucky to have had this opportunity to get a real high school diploma. Passages is honestly more than just school; it's also been like a family. Thank you for all your help, Wayfinder Schools!

## **Bonding With Ryker**

*by Devon S. Danforth*

I have noticed that my son has different ways of showing us his different needs.

When he has the "hungry cry," I make him a bottle.

If he needs his diaper changed, we can usually smell it and then we change it.

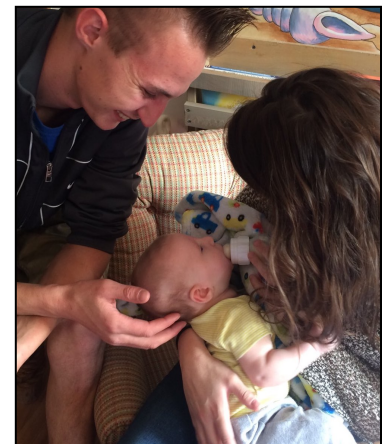
If he wants attention, it's more like a whimper than a cry.

When he is tired he snuggles in and rubs his head on my arm and grabs my shirt.

When he is in pain or not feeling good he screams and makes it very noticeable.

When he is very happy and excited, he lets me know by smiling very big and now he giggles and laughs when you play with him. He loves being tickled.

I watched a video about infant cue videos and I learned how to read what a baby needs and what they are looking for just by the expression on their face and their body movement. Ryker has his own movements and cues to get what he wants.



I watched a video called, The Still Face Experiment. They showed what can happen when you ignore or are not interacting with your baby.

This video made me feel like the baby was getting mentally messed with. It was putting it out there that the baby can show their feelings when they are getting ignored compared to when getting played with.

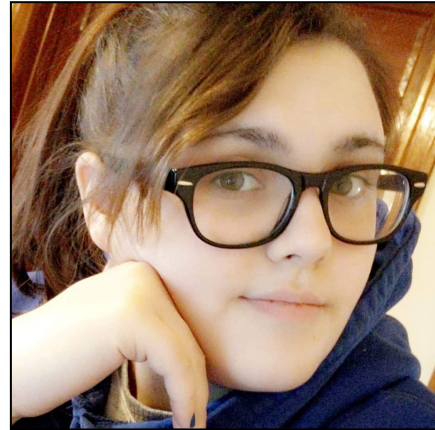
This video made me see that when I'm on my phone or watching TV, and Ryker is crying not to ignore him or get too caught up in what I am doing. I also learned not to leave him unattended for an excessive amount of time.

When Ryker was a baby I was not as close to him as his mother. As he got older there were some things that I did with him to get a closer bond like playing with him more often, laying on the floor with him and his toys, putting my mouth on the other end of his bottle when he is drinking it to get a funny and interesting reaction from him.

As he has gotten older it has been easier to have a bond with him and I feel like as he gets older our bond will continue to get stronger and stronger.



## Candace DeJesus *Lewiston*



My time in Passages has been strange for me because of all the support, help, and understanding I've been shown. Life had not been kind to me, and when I first joined I felt like a huge outsider. Once I went to workshops and met other students, I felt a lot better. I was scared because I thought everyone was going to be older than me. Turns out, we're all around the same age, and everyone is going at their own pace.

Passages isn't easy, but it's so worth it. The hard work and effort I have put into the Passages program has paid me back in many ways. I've gotten more confident and I feel like it was my stepping stone into adulthood.

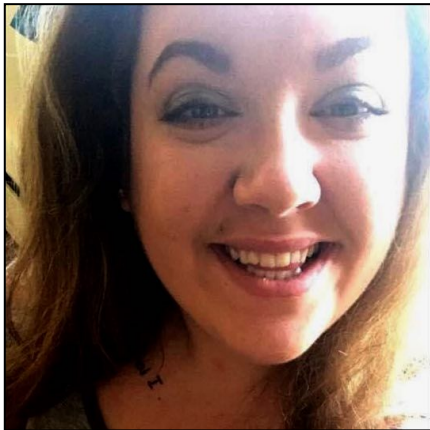
Joining Passages was one of the best decisions I've ever made, and I know that the skills and information I've learned can be used in the real world — even math.





# Savanah Marie Doak-Turner

## *Cushing*



In December of 2005, my grandmother passed away and twenty days later my mother told the family that she had an inoperable brain tumor. I was only eight years old and my world was spiraling out of control.

My mother began to use narcotics and I became homeless not once, but twice. My mother was in and out of jail and rehab. My biological father and stepfather were both dealing with alcoholism, and I was struggling with the loss of multiple family members. My aunt died in 2010 and that was when my depression really hit. My aunt was my best friend and although I knew the time would come when she would be gone, I was not expecting it to be when I was 12 years old.

When I was 16, I dropped out of high school because of some difficulties in my life at the time. After dropping out, I worked at McDonald's to help provide for myself and my family. During this time, I became homeless again and if it wasn't for my friend Kristina and her mother I wouldn't have had a place to rest my head at night. I started the GED program at my local Adult Education center, but I would always find an excuse not to go. During this

time, I fell and slipped into some dark holes. It was very difficult to get myself out of the darkness, but I was able to with the support of my family and friends.

In 2018 I finally got my life somewhat together - who really has it ALL together? I got a good job at Sweetser working at the Children's Residential Unit. After working at Sweetser for about a year, I saw a post on Facebook about Wayfinder Schools. When I first submitted my application I honestly didn't think that I was going to be accepted because I was on the higher end of the age limit, but then I got an email saying that I was accepted into this wonderful program. I was so excited to further myself and my career.

During my time in Passages, I have learned so much about my inner self. I have learned that I am capable of doing anything that I put my mind to, and that I can allow myself to ask for help when I need it. I learned how to deal with larger crowds and that I can make friends with people I don't know. This helped me realize I'll always have the support I need.

I love Wayfinder Schools, all the amazing teachers, and new and past students too! My teacher Cindy Stevenson has taught me so many valuable things in life. The most genuine thing that I have learned is that it doesn't matter how long it takes to accomplish something, it's getting it done that matters. She is the only reason why I am graduating - even if it is five years later than my expected date!

I also want to say thank you to my wonderful boyfriend, Zachary. Between making me popcorn while I'm FaceTiming with Kristina late at night or making sure that I take time out of our busy lives to get schoolwork done, he's been a huge support.

## **My Tribute to Kristina**

*by Savannah Doak-Turner*

This tribute goes out to my best friend Kristina Lee Kenney. No matter how long we go without talking she always has my back, as I have hers. She has grown into a wonderful woman, and mother to Sander. Kristina is always supporting me in my life, no matter if the decisions I make seem irresponsible.



**K** - Kind, Knockout, Knowledgeable, Ketchup

**R** - Respectful, Ruthless, Radiant, Rebellious, Resilient

**I** - Imaginative, Impatient, Inspiring, Illimitable

**S** - Sander, Smart, Sarcastic, Sassy, Safe

**T** - Talented, Thieving, Terrific, Truthful

**I** - Interesting, Indulge, Independent

**N** - Neat-handed, Nutty, Nervous

**A** - Admirable, Accepting, Adventurous, Ambitious, Anxious

These are just a few words that describe my best friend. I am so excited, and proud to graduate with her like we were supposed to back in 2016.

## **Elizabeth Elaine Hustus**

*Searsport*



Wayfinder Schools's Passages program was my saving grace. I am so grateful to have stumbled across their website because it gave me a second chance to finish high school and graduate with a real diploma. I was able to complete the core skills at my own pace and that helped so much. Going through pregnancy and having a new baby at home is a lot! I was still able to accomplish my goals with the help of my teacher.

My teacher, Cathy, is absolutely amazing. Not only is she a great teacher, but she also has a really big heart. She is understanding of all my real-life situations and has always pushed me to do my best. I can't thank all of the staff at Wayfinder Schools enough for all of the hard work and effort they put into each and every student. They truly change lives for the better. I'm now able to move on and start college in the fall of 2020.

## **Loving Kennedy**

*by Elizabeth Elaine Hustus*

Throughout the first trimester of my pregnancy, I was unaware that I was pregnant at all. (Crazy right?) I guess it is true that all



women are different, so each pregnancy is. In October of 2018, I went through a miscarriage at eight weeks pregnant. After my miscarriage, my doctor told me that my body may need time to get back on track. My period did not return after my miscarriage and I didn't think much of it until months went on. This time I was pregnant with a healthy, fully formed, baby girl.

Since it was my first time having a baby, I didn't have a plan on how I wanted the birth to go. I knew that I wanted to deliver her as naturally as possible, but if it came down to me being in too much pain I would be okay with having an epidural to ease that. I decided on only having my mother and Troy (the baby's father) in the delivery room to make it less stressful for me. I chose Dr. Mailloux to deliver my baby since he had delivered my sister's children as well and I was already comfortable with him.

I ended up going a week over my due date and went in to be induced. At 10 o'clock that morning they admitted me into labor and delivery, and started me on an oral dose of "miso." This started working immediately and gave me steady contractions. On Tuesday morning, they gave me Pitocin through an IV because I hadn't dilated any further than one centimeter. The contractions kept coming and soon I was at two centimeters. In the afternoon, a woman came into the hospital at only 31 weeks along, having seizures. Only two nurses were working in labor and delivery at the time, so I had to be taken off Pitocin, as they could not be available for two deliveries at once. My contractions slowed down then and I stayed at two centimeters for the remainder of the day. I was exhausted from not being able to eat or sleep in the hospital and all I wanted was to go

home. I was discharged so I could go home and rest.

Once I arrived home I started having steady contractions again. The contractions intensified so much that I was having hot sweats and labor shakes. I went into the bathroom and as I was getting sick my water broke. They admitted me again and I was having contractions all on my own and dilating without any medication. By five pm my doctor had checked me and I was eight centimeters dilated. I couldn't take the pain of contractions any longer and I asked for an epidural. This allowed me to relax and sleep in between contractions. Soon I was 10cm dilated but couldn't feel my contractions enough to push. The nurses turned the epidural down and put me back on Pitocin so I could feel the contractions enough to start pushing. By 9:31 pm I started to push and 22 minutes later Kennedy entered the world at 9:53 pm weighing eight lbs. 2oz and 21 1/2 inches long. Seeing her beautiful face for the first time, hearing her cry, and having her placed on my chest was the most amazing thing that I have ever experienced in my life. Being able to hold this little life in my arms that I created and carried inside me for nine months was unlike anything else. It was an instant bond and connection; I love her unconditionally.



# Kristina Lee Kenney

## Hope



*“Some 10 million children in the U.S. have parents who have been incarcerated. These innocent youngsters, studies show, face long odds of success in life. But slowly, efforts to help them are growing....White children with parent(s) incarcerated are 1 in 57.”*

Jill Tucker, ‘Captive Lives’, *San Francisco Chronicle*

I am a part of this statistic.

The first time mom went to court she came back with McDonald’s takeout and it just was an ordinary day. The second time she went to court we were not so lucky. That is when my life got turned upside down. I was a 12-year-old girl and it seemed like a really important age to not have my mom.

The four years my Mom was incarcerated I got to stay with my aunt and didn’t have to go into foster care. I will be forever grateful that I didn’t get taken away from my family. Living with my aunt had its ups and downs and it often felt as if she was a teenager too and not much of a role model.

I had been through a lot of traumatic things for a young girl, and school was the last place I wanted to go. Many of my peers and even adults were making accusations about my

mother. Having my mom’s business all over the newspapers was not only hurtful but embarrassing. I got bullied in school and the looks that my peers gave me still haunt me today. I believe that is the reason why I gave up on going to school and eventually dropped out.

Some people might have thought my bad behavior was just because of my mom. In a way, it was because I was a young girl trying to adjust to this new life. In reality, my behavior was because of the way I had been treated and made to feel that I wasn’t good enough, and that I was doomed.

I did get into trouble with the law when I was a teenager because at that point I had given up. I ended up in juvie, even though it was only for one night that was all I needed to straighten out my act. I can still remember like it was yesterday lying there that night in an orange jumpsuit, and at that moment I realized that this was not the life I wanted to live. When I got out I changed my group of friends, stayed clear of stupid decisions and got my life back on track!

I had no idea of the exact date my mom would be released. I was at my friend's house and my aunt said she was coming to get me and that I had to be home for supper. When I walked through the door and went to my bedroom, I was taken by surprise by who came around the corner. It was my mom! I was shocked because I couldn’t believe this was finally happening. She looked so different from when I last saw her. She was so healthy and beautiful! We spent a lot of time together even though we still didn’t live together. She was living at my Nan’s for quite a while, working until she could afford to get us a place to live. While spending time with her and getting to know each other again I realized how much we

had in common. It may sound silly but it felt reassuring to see that we had the same nervous feet and the same angry stare. Time and distance apart didn't change that I am my mother's daughter and I'll always be proud of that!

As in the opening quote, I am living proof that I can change. I am now a mother to a handsome, active 18-month-old boy. I am graduating high school and I am looking forward to furthering my education. I feel as if what I went through in my childhood is motivating me to be better than what statistics claim. Every day I am proving to myself that I can do whatever I set my mind to.

## **Finally Graduating**

*by Kristina Lee Kenney*

I heard about Passages through my good friend Savannah. She had been enrolled in Passages for a few months and said that it would be a perfect fit for me. Ironically, we both dropped out of high school the same year and now she was pushing me to have an interview at Wayfinder Schools. We both thought about how cool it would be to finally have "our time" to march across a stage and get our diplomas!

I was nervous about the process of enrollment because I didn't know what to expect, but after meeting Cindy at my interview, I did know that I definitely wanted her for my teacher. Luckily, I got accepted and got my wish.

Trying to get back into the rhythm of school was harder than I thought it would be because I was a new mom, and trying to run a household. After a while, I got comfortable and started busting out my core skills. A few months ago I thought I would never complete my coursework in time to graduate, but Cindy kept reassuring

me and here I am graduating this June with my best friend.

Passages worked for me because my teacher came to me and worked with me one-on-one. I learned so much more than just the core skills in my binder. Attending workshops helped me to be more social and it helped me build my confidence and it got me used to bringing my son Sander out and about. We went to places like the Children's Museum, The Center for Maine Contemporary Art, and the apple orchard! Seeing how happy that made Sander made me feel really good. In the transportation core skill, it is a requirement to pass your permit test. As nervous as I was I passed my permit test with flying colors. Seven years later than I would have liked, but it was a huge accomplishment for me.



When it came time to choose a topic for my Passage Project I had a hard time understanding what the project actually meant. I thought about researching about a possible career in law enforcement. During that conversation with Cindy, I remember saying that I felt that my anxiety would always hold me back from achieving what I want to do in life. That is when she suggested that maybe I should do my project on learning skills to help cope with my anxiety. Thanks to Fern, the second teacher on my committee I had the great opportunity to work with her friend Suzanne



who is a life coach in Minnesota. Through this process, I have learned many ways to help manage my anxiety and I have noticed a big difference in myself. I can use these tools for a lifetime. This project was more than I thought it would or could be.

I am thankful for Passages and being a part of Wayfinder Schools. I never thought that I would get my high school diploma or be looking into furthering my education. Now I am researching schools that offer forensic science. It really is true that whatever you set your mind to you can achieve! I pray that my strength and perseverance pass on to my son, Sander.

## Olivia Rose Orff

### *Waldoboro*



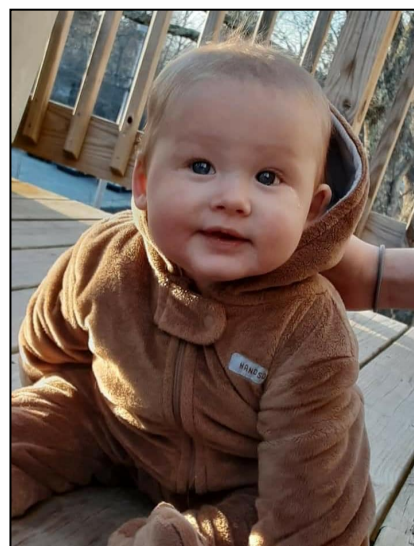
My time in Passages began two years ago. At that time I was living with my boyfriend at his mother's house, pregnant with our daughter. I was hardly working or leaving the house, and never expected to graduate high school. In 2016 I dropped out of Oceanside High School. I was in my sophomore year after months of declining attendance.

When I started Passages I had no idea of the impact it would have on my life. More

specifically, the bond formed between student and teacher. Joy and Cindy have both pushed me to do what is best for myself when I lacked courage or motivation. Without either of them I would not be where I am today — finally graduating high school, living in an apartment, with a job, and applying for college.

My eyes have been opened to opportunities and experiences I never would have had, had I not been a student here. I did things like go to an art museum and to workshops about making hummus and even dogsledding! I left every single workshop with a smile. Not only was I introduced to activities, but also friendships. Some of us are still making plans to get together for our own “workshops.”

It is a bittersweet moment to be graduating. On one hand, there is a new door opening with new opportunities. On the other hand, a closing door, filled with great memories that will no longer be able to make new. Thank you to not only Joy and Cindy, but to every member of the Wayfinder staff who contributed to making my years great. Jackson will be lucky to have teachers half as amazing as you.



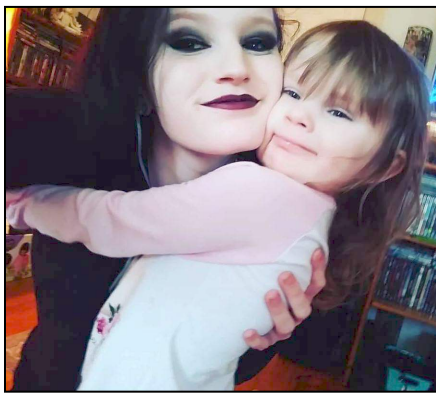
## Shelby Robinson *Auburn*



I started Passages in 2016 because I needed my high school diploma, and after I had my daughter, my school wasn't working with me like they originally agreed to do.

I heard about Passages from a social services worker who recommended I try it since I really wanted my high school diploma.

At first, it was weird - not like a normal school. It was hard to stay focused with how hectic my life was. I was learning to be a parent, and working at a job at the same time, but with the help of family, friends, and a dedicated teacher, I made it to the end of the program and I am graduating.



I've learned a lot while in Passages - not what I thought I'd learn, but a lot. It's allowed me to learn a variety of different things. Almost

all of the core skills are based on things I needed to know or should know to be a successful parent and adult. The core skills also taught me things I might not have otherwise realized are important to be a successful human and productive parent. Plus, I got to see how other parents around my age do in the same situation with similar struggles.

I recommend Passages to all the young parents that I know who weren't able to finish school due to becoming parents. It's a good opportunity to get ready for life and parenting.



**“Live a life that is driven more strongly by curiosity than by fear. “**

*- Elizabeth Gilbert*

