

Community Resources Worked Together to Move Nakita from Domestic Violence Victim to College Student

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The confident and smiling woman sitting in front of me gives no hint of the trauma she suffered growing up in St. Louis, the victim of child abuse. After living in a domestic violence shelter for three months in 2008, Nakita began her journey to a new life.

Nakita was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, the eldest of two sisters. Nakita never knew her father and her mother married the man who was the father of her two sisters. This family dynamic caused Nakita to feel like an outsider. Her mother favored her sisters and Nakita never felt like she could earn her mother's love. Nakita loved to go to school, but her mother made her do housework while her sisters did their homework making it difficult for Nakita to keep up with her class. Without encouragement from her mother, Nakita decided to drop out of school at age 14. Since she was not in school, her mother found a way for Nakita to earn money to support the family.

Nakita's mother made arrangements with men in the neighborhood to spend time with Nakita in exchange for money. These men bought Nakita clothes and jewelry, but more importantly to mom, they gave her money in exchange for Nakita's time.

At age 15, mom found Nakita a job at a strip joint, where the money was better and more consistent. Nakita was bringing home stacks of money and Mom was happy with the arrangement because she no longer had to work.

But this new arrangement put Nakita in danger. Nakita had an admirer who wanted to take her out on a date. He became more and more aggressive toward her. Nakita was frightened and had second thoughts about going to the strip club, but mom forced her to go back.



Nakita plans to work toward an LPN degree so she can give back to others.

Nakita left work at 2:00 a.m. one Saturday morning and walked home by herself, only to find her admirer waiting for her at the house. The owner of the club told the man where Nakita lived. He kicked in the door and sexually assaulted her.

Nakita checked into a hospital for rape victims. The hospital exam revealed that Nakita was pregnant. Seventeen, unwed, and pregnant, she moved in with her boyfriend. He did not believe the baby was his and the abuse began as soon as she moved in. He kept her captive inside the house and if Nakita managed to leave to run errands he would lock her out when she returned. He even hit her across the stomach in an attempt to make her lose the baby.

After the birth of her daughter, Nakyra, she went to live with a cousin, but her boyfriend continued to stalk and abuse her. To support herself and her daughter, she went to work at a Catholic School. One day the Principal of the school discovered Nakita badly limping down the hall. Her boyfriend had thrown her down a flight of stairs. Concerned for her life, the Principal found three shelters for abuse victims that could take Nakita. Nakita made the decision to relocate to Springfield.

Nakita and Nakyra arrived in Springfield in December 2008. They spent three months at the Family Violence Center where she learned skills to help her cope with her abusive past.

When Nakita was ready to leave the shelter, she was able to get the Section 8 Housing Voucher she had in St. Louis transferred to housing in Springfield. Next was a visit to the OACAC Greene County Neighborhood Center where she met Cyndy and began Case Management. Nakita learned that Nakyra was eligible for OACAC Head Start and enrolled her in the Stewart Head Start Center. Cyndy helped Nakita find a doctor who began therapy after Nakita reported that she was suffering from depression. Nakita did not like telling her story over and over again, but eventually realized this was part of the healing process. She slowly began to turn her life around.

Nakita knew that she would not be able to find work without first completing her education and she decided to take classes to earn her GED at Pathways United Methodist Church. Nakita was so determined to pass the GED the first time she asked teachers for extra homework to make sure she was prepared. Several nights she fell asleep with her face in a book. With the help of the Missouri Career Center, who paid for her test, she passed and earned her GED Credential.

Carol Slavens, her current case manager at OACAC Greene County Center is proud of the determination that Nakita has shown in getting her education. “Nakita was so determined to get her education and she continues to be determined to further her education,” says Slavens. Nakita explains that her daughter Nakyra inspires her by saying, “Momma you can do it. I know you can do it!”

“OACAC and all of the organizations I have worked with since I came to Springfield have been such a help”, says Nakita. “I can ask Carol anything and she knows what resources in the community will help.” Nakita also participates in programs offered by OACAC. Nakita has completed two OACAC Life Skills classes, Energy Savers and Budgeting. She will soon begin two more classes, Chef on a Shoestring and Landlord Tenant Law.

Life is not easy for this single mother, but the outlook is very bright for both Nakita and her daughter. With the support and assistance of several organizations, Nakita has made the transition from victim to victor. In January, Nakita will begin classes at Ozarks Technical College where she hopes get into the LPN program. Nakyra is doing well in Head Start and will start kindergarten at public school next year. Nakita loves Nakyra and is determined to give her a healthier childhood than the one she experienced. Both Nakita and Nakyra seems to share a positive outlook on life. At just age 4 ½ she already repeats her mother’s favorite phrase, “when you believe you can achieve!”

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