

In January of 1997, a long time ago, I became a mom for the first time. It was the second semester of my junior year in high school and I had made a choice that no matter what happened, I would do all things possible to graduate. During my pregnancy I had reached out to The Children's Center on site at the high school and was put on a waiting list. As soon as spot became available, I would bring my son in to daycare. No problem, I thought to myself, many people had offered to help take care of the baby. But when my son was finally born, not one person was able to help babysit so I could return to school.

During medical leave, I received notice that a spot had opened up and as soon as April 1 of that year. I would be able to bring my son to school with me and drop him off at daycare. Great I thought, I can manage from February to April no biggie. Then reality hit. I struggled daily to find a sitter. The support system that I thought I had in place failed. Many times, the thought of dropping out of high school crossed my mind. My focus had shifted from graduating to finding a babysitter, my grades were suffering and the decision to quit school was quickly becoming the only solution. That all changed once I was able to bring my son in to school with me.

I graduated one year later and eventually went on to higher education, successfully completing a graduate degree. Looking back now, I know that it was all possible in large part to The Children's Center. The decision to place my son in a daycare center was not a hard one to make. After all, I had attended two years of preschool at the site across from Cicero School many years ago 😊.

Not only did The Children's Center help me begin my journey as a student but also as a parent. As time has passed, my goals have changed over the years. However, without reliable childcare, I may not have achieved many of them. On behalf of my mom, my son and myself; Thank You!

Maria B. Morales

Morton East Class of 1998