

SEASON OF SHARING

Soon-to-be college grad thankful for help

She's completing internship at Bridges out of Poverty.

December 02, 2012 | By GENE STOWE | South Bend Tribune Correspondent



Photo provided

Jamien Fleming had a few college credits in education when she moved to South Bend from Chicago more than five years ago. When they didn't transfer, she tried business, then settled on human services.

"That's what I'm sticking with," says Jamien, who made the dean's list at Ivy Tech Community College last summer. "I absolutely love it."

She's on track to graduate next year, the first in her family, and along with her degree, Jamien will bring life experience from both sides of human services to her career.

She's been on the receiving end, with help from Youth Service Bureau, the Center for the Homeless, St. Margaret's House and Hannah's House, where she lived when her daughter Janorhea was born five years ago.

Janorhea and her son Josiah attend the Montessori School at the Center for the Homeless. Jamien has graduated from the Getting Ahead and Financial

Literacy classes offered by Bridges Out of Poverty.

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"The Getting Ahead class teaches you things you don't learn in school or if you aren't in a certain socioeconomic group -- the hidden rules of society," she says. "It teaches you how to present yourself in a certain manner, how to talk, to sit, to listen, to be involved in the community."

Now Jamien is on the giving end of human services. She's president of the Getting Ahead Club at Ivy Tech, she volunteers at Hannah's House, helping with a moms' support group, and she's doing her Ivy Tech internship at Bridges out of Poverty.

"When it was time for me to do my internship, I couldn't think of any other place I would rather have it," says Jamien, who helps around the office, answers the phone, makes calls and revises the monthly newsletter, including an interview with a Bridges graduate. "Once my internship is done, I'll keep coming."

Jamien, who grew up in Chicago, invited her parents to her apartment for Thanksgiving and cooked her first turkey.

"This is the farthest I've been away from home," she says. "I came here to get away from the big city life. It was so busy, so fast-paced."

Her son, Jayden, 9, the first boy of his generation in her family, lives with his grandparents in Chicago part time. In addition to Janorhea, 5, and Josiah, 3, Jamien is expecting a baby in March.

"They're my motivation, my goal to tough it out no matter what," Jamien says.

How to help

Jamien Fleming's 1998 Explorer recently broke down, leaving her walking to work after she walks the children to school. She needs help with repairs or a replacement car.

The family also needs a couch, winter coats for Josiah (size 5) and Janorhea (size 6-7), winter books for everyone, socks, toiletries, cleaning supplies and equipment for the baby, including clothes, a bassinet, a stroller, diapers and bottles.

Bridges Out of Poverty (www.sjebbridges.org) needs materials for its classes and networking meetings, including binders, pens, pencils, bottled water, flash drives, certificate frames, planners, envelopes, snacks, pizza gift certificates, gift cards from Sam's Club, Martin's Super Markets, Wal-Mart, gas cards, gift for raffles, greeting cards, white and colored printer paper, greeting cards, ink cartridges and other office supplies.

To help, call 574-246-0533.