

## GENE'VE MAKING DREAMS A REALITY



How can the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program at the WAGE Center help Albany Housing Authority Residents and Housing Choice Voucher recipients meet their goals? Ask Gene'Ve Parson who has completed a Bachelor's Degree with honors, bought a new SUV and landed a full-time salaried job with benefits.

Two years ago Gene'Ve was pregnant, did not have a car or a job and depended on assistance to make ends meet. But she received a letter about FSS and says she used it as a "drive for me to do more work towards becoming self-sufficient." She first met with Bill Paben who was temporarily managing the program. Gene'Ve says, "Bill was so great because he told me he could see me graduating and even going further than that. He helped me realize that even if goals took time, if I wrote them down it would help make them more attainable."

Fast forward two years and Gene'Ve has "set goals several times (including 5 year goals) and [has] reached them and started on a new set." She has now completed several goals and is ready to achieve more, saying, "Who would have thought that my next goal would be finding a house, signing up for a Master's program, accepting a new job offer?" Because she has earned a Bachelor's Degree, she says she has the opportunity to accept a "job offer making more than I ever could have imagined – actually enough to pay my bills and take care of my kids on my own!"

But, the self-improvement doesn't stop with the end of the FSS program for Gene'Ve. She aims to "keep getting better and showing my three daughters that with set goals and help, you can achieve anything." She plans to complete a real estate program to supplement her income, which she says will "prevent me from needing help again."

Gene'Ve has accepted a position at Unity House as a Human Resources Administrator, where she will have the opportunity to work in an agency that changes lives. She is the perfect role model not only for her daughters, but also for people who may feel that they don't know where to turn. Her advice to FSS participants and anyone seeking goals is, "Believe in yourself." She further explains that people should not only accept the help that is available, but also to use it to get support and inspiration. She says it helped to have Bill's encouragement, because she always "got the best grades so Bill wouldn't see me fail."

Now, Gene'Ve will be keeping in touch with the WAGE Center to recruit for open positions at Unity House and for other professional networking opportunities. After a diligent two years of work on her Bachelor's degree with the support of the FSS program, she is ready to contribute to the human services community in significant ways, while also providing inspiration to her daughters to persevere and keep setting goals.

