



The Passages Press

CONGRATULATIONS 2010 GRADUATES!



Naomi DeWalt



Misti Norwood



Christian Roberts



Nicole Wallace



Tiphani Williams



Renee Grey



Naomi Marr



Kristina Ott



Sarah Troxel

Naomi DeWalt



Naomi & Amelia

The Passages program was a good experience for me. I thought I would never graduate when I dropped out of school and got pregnant with Amelia. I'm glad I had the opportunity to graduate and I'm really glad I pursued it.

Janet was a good teacher and an even better friend. I could talk to her about anything and she'd listen. She'd help me and give me the best advice she could. We laughed a lot through the eight months; mostly, she laughed at me, but I had a lot of fun.

I figured the Passages program would be like any other school, but it was the complete opposite. It wasn't just math, science or social studies; it was a self-learning experience and I learned a lot about myself. I've achieved and amounted to so much this year that I once thought was beyond me.

I changed my ways and got a new outlook on being a mom. I learned that being

a parent doesn't take away opportunities, it presents new ones. Granted, some things get complicated at times, but no parent's perfect no matter what their age because life's a struggle.

I'm glad I took my life into a new direction and enrolled myself in the Passages program. I'm looking forward to my future with my new knowledge and my new outlook.

Kristina Ott



Kristina and Kylie

In January of 2008 I found out I was pregnant with my beautiful baby girl Kylie Ellen. I wasn't doing well in school at all - skipping class, partying and I just didn't care about anything; I don't even think I had half a credit for a class. I dropped out of Medomak almost as soon as I found out. I wanted a way out of there and fast!

I knew that I wanted to finish high school, but I had no idea how I was going to manage trying to care for a baby and find time for schoolwork. My grandmother told me about Passages and I wasn't exactly sure about it at first. I wondered how I was going to learn as much as a regular high school student only meeting once a week for an hour? I decided to give it a try. I did my challenges, had my interview, and then started the schooling in late October, two weeks after I had my baby. Now, it's only been a year and a half and I'm graduating. I can't believe it!

Passages is a great program and I'd definitely recommend it to any teen who is pregnant or who has a baby. The teachers are great, the workshops are fun and you get to meet girls your age that are going through the same things you are. Andrea is my teacher and she has to be by far the best teacher I've ever met! I never would have been able to get this far if it weren't for her pushes of encouragement when I was in slack mode. She really listened to what I had to say when things in life weren't going so hot and never failed to tell me just what she thought about it, which always made me feel better.

I'm really glad that I got to experience the Passages program. It's made a huge difference in my life. I just can't even believe it's only been a year and a half and I'm already finished. I'm so shocked! If I had gone back to Medomak, I would have been a year behind



my class; now I'm graduating a year before.

My Passage

I've always loved to bake. I grew up watching my grandmother bake all the time and I guess ever since then I've just had a thing for it. So I decided for my Passage I wanted to learn about baking. I've been going to the Farmers Fare in Rockport and watching Anne Heflin bake. I have a couple of recipes from her that I'm going to try myself and add into the cookbook that I'm making for my final project. I also plan on making a powerpoint about the baking techniques that I've learned.

Renee Grey



Renee and Isabella

I can see it happening one day... one of my kids will tell me that they no longer want to go to school. They could use any excuse they wanted as a reason. I did not want to have to answer the question, "You never finished school, so why do I have to?" Thanks to Passages I can proudly say, "Yes I did finish school!"

The best thing about this program is I was able to work at my own pace. Some things would take me a week to complete and others would take me a month or two. But it did not matter. As long as I was doing the work and was showing effort it did not matter how long it took. This is great because being a

parent means life is unpredictable and being a parent to four means it is even more so.

The second best thing about this program is that you learn about life skills. You never really learn about life skills in school. Life skills are important because everyone in this program is a parent. Being a parent you need to know how to take care of your child, budgeting and many other things. They make sure we know and understand so we can have a brighter future for us and our children.

Andrea was my teacher, but I do not only see her as a teacher but as a friend and someone I can confide in and look to for advice. I think she has gone above and beyond what a teacher is called to do. She always pushed me to do more than I thought I could. Thanks to her I have accomplished things I never thought I could, such as graduating and receiving a 90.5 on my math exam. Thank you Andrea and everyone who has made it possible for parents like me to finish school.

Sarah Troxel



Sarah and Sophia

Is it the end? That is a question asked by many people about many different things. In this case, my “end” is graduating. Yes, graduating is an accomplishment, since an accomplishment is being able to move on to

new, more exciting things in life - things such as going to Florida's culinary school or NYC's? Well, that's where reality sets in. I have a daughter, Sophia Marie, and I can't exactly just up and leave to go do whatever I want to. I have a daughter who needs me and my time.

This is where the Passages program fits in. I thought that I would not be able to find time to build a life for myself, let alone my baby girl, but the Passages Program taught me how to do it. Andrea (my teacher) helped me with the papers for school and rides to the workshops and made it so I am graduating this year. But Passages and Andrea have helped me a lot more than that, a lot more than just graduating. I have dealt with quite a few obstacles within the last five years, but the last two were the hardest and greatest. I had Sophia, but with a man that was... well, not as sweet as my daughter. I had to get a restraining order for abuse and now am dealing with the custody battle. I also work over forty hours a week and Sophia lives with me in an apartment above my work, along with my boyfriend Matt.

Going through all this is very scary, hard and long. But my Passage that I am actually doing, the courage to do it is all because of Andrea and the Passages program. My Passage to graduate is to show how I have learned to not be scared because I will always have someone there, my daughter and family, and to be motivated so when life gets hard and I can't seem to see that “other way out” I will keep looking and moving. I have created a scrapbook of my past two years of being with the Passages program. I look through it and it shows me what I have done rather than what I could have or should have done.

Then there are the workshops. The workshops gave me time, bonding time with my daughter, which is very hard to find as I work all the time. It made me bring home more fun back to our own house. I bought Sophia colorful scarves and music toys after going to a music workshop with her. I played the music I got from the workshop and played with the

scarves and she loved it!

That's what makes me know the answer to the one question, "Is it the end?" No, it's not the end, I know now I can accomplish all these things in life at such a young age with a daughter, because I am prepared like every other student was in high school, and I could do it because it fit in with my daughter and her schedule. That's what made it so I could graduate, and now I know the answer to that one question that many people ask about many different things.

The Passage...

"The Passage"....Aww yes. The one thing that I was told about and heard of, but once it came to me I did not expect it. I can not really describe my Passage on paper to say out loud. I don't mean that in a bad way at all, that's why it is sometimes hard. My main goal is to get my driver's permit and get my license, and I am still going to reach that goal. I have taken a permit test once already and missed by two questions about the road signs. Ya, go figure. But I am not going to give up, and I know that I have the motivation and I am smart enough to do it. Now getting my permit test is a little difficult for me; I have dyslexia and I get very nervous under pressure. Reading is also not one of my specialties, so studying was difficult, but even though I did not pass this time, I got pretty darn close, two away?! Really? But I have my notes from my book that I took and I know that it will be a snap the next time.

Now with getting my license I also did a scrapbook of the time my daughter was born and what I have done up until now. I have dealt with a lot more than most people should have had to. I was in an abusive relationship, took care of my newborn, boyfriend, his brother and myself on my own. Working over

60 hours per week with two jobs. My mother came down with breast cancer and I was going to school. This was the first year! Ya, here comes the second one! This year was the year where I got out. I got the help I needed from the people around me, but mostly myself and my daughter to get out of that. I have not dealt with all of that hectic life style yet, but it's getting there. I left my boyfriend and moved into my mother's with my daughter. I then moved out into my own place right above my work with my daughter and new boyfriend. My mother has no more sign of breast cancer, and still has my brother at home with her. I still work just as much in the summer, which comes with my job. But having Matt there, too, helps, as does living above my work. Also, I love baking! And now I am graduating! YA, I liked this year better.



Sarah in Zampa's kitchen

Making this scrapbook showed me all these things, but mostly showed me I did it, and that I can do a lot more than I or anyone else thought. And in some way driving comes into that as well. How? Well, I have a HUGE phobia of driving, blaaah.... I just don't like the fact of driving a car that can kill someone going 15-mph. No thanks, well... that's what I thought. Honestly, having to go and take this test to graduate was a huge kick to get me to do it. I mean I knew I had to get it for my daughter and myself as well, but the Passage

made it happen a little faster. By helping me realize that I have done so much made me see that something like driving will be easy. I need to practice, oooh ya, but I can do it. And once I get my license to be able to go out into the world, already knowing I can get whatever I want as long as I know I can do it? Ya ok, I'm not like 100%, lets go! But I think I can do it and if I get a little lost I can always ask for help. Help is something that is a great thing that should be appreciated and not abused; my Passage and the Passages program helped me realize that.

Christian Roberts



Chris creating a video game

I decided to create a computer game for my Passage. I chose this project because I really like working with computers. I like repairing and programming them. I've known how to use programs and repair computers for a long time. My Dad taught me almost all I know about repairing them. When I was in high school I went to computer/networking class, which I enjoyed very much.

It was a difficult Passage to take on because of all the time it takes and all the code I had to write for it. I also have to make graphics for the game and create levels. The

game is really fun to do though, because I get to make it any way I want.

In the end this project will help me if I decide to go into the computer-programming field. Creating this game will show that I have experience and skill. Writing computer games is a job that I would like to have someday. By the time I graduate I will have a fully working game.

Tiphani Williams



Christian, Tiphani and Connor

I got pregnant at sixteen years old and my boyfriend Chris was fifteen. I found out that I was pregnant a week before our one year anniversary. We had no idea what to expect becoming teenage parents. Neither of us had jobs so we didn't know how we would get diapers, wipes, food or clothes. It was a good thing that both of our families were very supportive of my pregnancy after it sunk in. They said they would help us with anything we needed, but they wouldn't do it forever, because it wasn't their responsibility. Lucky for us we were having a baby boy - lucky because my sister has two boys and we could use their clothes. I decided to breastfeed my son so we didn't have to worry about buying formula. It was a good decision, because I loved every minute of it. The connection it made between us was amazing.



Tiphani happily working on her Passage

My son's name is Connor Alexander Roberts. He was born on January 1, 2009 - a New Year's baby in Belfast. I couldn't believe he was finally here. I went full term with him and had him right on my due date. It was so exciting, but also a bit scary as it became real then. I had a baby to take care of. I was no longer a child; I was a mother. I had nights I wasn't able to sleep; some nights I woke up every hour, but I knew that I had to do it and it was totally worth it. Everybody told me how hard it was going to be to become a teenage mother. What they didn't tell me was how much I would enjoy and love every minute of it. Even if it meant waking up to that sweet baby's face every hour to feed him, it was worth waking up for. I wouldn't change my life, if I had a chance to go back and do it again. I couldn't give up seeing my sweet child's face every night before I go to sleep and his face every morning. It's the best feeling in the world to be a mother and to know that Chris and I made such a sweet and wonderful boy.

My son is now 16 months old. In that time I've learned so much about who my little boy is, like what he likes to eat, what his favorite toy is, or that he hates having dirty hands and clothes. First little boy I've ever met that hates being dirty! But it's little things like that that show his personality. Connor's a happy child. Everyone comments on this. It

helps me know I'm doing things right. He learned how to walk the day after his first birthday. I was so excited because I was the one who taught him.

A part of me wishes I'd waited to have a child. I missed out on a lot of teenage things after dropping out of high school, and in some ways I'm too young to be a mother. But lucky for me there was the Passages program just made to help kids like me. It helped me learn how to be a mother and to handle this new life.

Nicole Wallace



Nicole & Joshua Wallace

The Community School is a great opportunity for all young parents. In today's society it is hard to find a job to support yourself, let alone a family, without your high school diploma. The Passages program allows you to get that diploma in the comfort of your home while raising your family.

I chose this program because I became pregnant at seventeen when I was not quite finished with high school. I had a lot of difficulties with my pregnancy and frequent doctor's visits. It would have been almost

impossible for me to finish school through a regular full-time high school. I would have missed too many days and would have had to redo my last year of high school, so I chose to drop out, not knowing how I would get my diploma. I heard about the CSchool sometime afterwards and I am pleased I did. My oldest son was born with a lot of complications causing him to need a lot more attention and time than normal. I then got pregnant with my second son who also has a lot of complications. The two of them had so many appointments, surgeries and daily therapies, that it felt like it was going to be impossible to ever receive my high school diploma.



Nicole with Gavin & Joshua

I remembered someone telling me about the Passages program and I thought it could be the only way to get my diploma. I called and enrolled and from then on my worries of not completing my high school education diminished. I finished my work at my own pace in between appointments, surgeries and diapers. The teachers were flexible with my schedule and helped me in any way they could. It did take me some time with all the difficulties going on in my life, but I finally made it through. I am now proud to say my boys are doing better. They are enrolled in a specialized preschool, which has given my husband and me some extra time during the day. Both of us have enrolled in the University

of Maine. We are taking it slow – a few classes at a time - but in a few years we will have the degrees we desire and the income to support our growing family.

I want to say thank you to all the teachers who have made this possible to all young parents. Without you there may not have been another way for some of us to receive the education we desire. Special thanks to my own teacher, Janet, for all the help, patience and support you have given my family and me. Thank you as well to all the other teachers and volunteers in the community who help us students throughout our journeys in life.

Naomi Marr



Naomi with Jason & Kiley

I am so close to graduation that I can feel, hear and smell it. I am so happy that I have gotten this far. I dropped out of high school and when it was too late to go back I realized that I wasn't going to go anywhere in my life. Later in life I gave birth to this little fiery, red-headed baby.

I was wondering why I was having this baby; they say everything happens for a reason. I couldn't wait to find out what Kiley was going to bring me. And to tell you the truth it is not until now that I really found the whole answer to that question.

My daughter Kiley Sue made it so I could go back to school and get my diploma. She gave me a new life, a second chance, love and happiness.

And if it wasn't for the Passages program believing in second chances, I wouldn't be writing this right now to you all, and I wouldn't be getting ready to set up for college either.

My teacher Andrea Itkin is a real teacher. Every teacher that taught me in my younger years I do NOT classify as teachers. They were there for a paycheck and that's it. A real teacher does not just teach, they learn; teachers are supposed to learn how their students learn, to actually teach us. And that's just what Andrea did. Andrea has taught me so much and I know she has learned a lot, too. One thing I am really proud about learning is history. I didn't know how we got here and how we made something from nothing. But now I do, and it makes me that much happier about where I live and gives me the respect to stop scribbling on George Washington's face that's on the dollar bill. Nah, probably won't stop doing that (IT'S A JOKE).

When I got into the Passages program I was stuck in mud up to my neck and sinking fast. Now I feel as though I am running on newly paved asphalt, with the sun shining upon my face and the wind on my back.

I have been through a lot while I have been in this program. They have never frowned at me or thought any different of me. The school has worked with me step by step all the way. I love this place and if I could have two wishes one would be that every school was like the Passages program all through America and the teachers were like Andrea.

Oh, my second wish would be for a million dollars; hell, let's make it a billion. Did you really think I was going to leave myself hanging? NEVAH!

Another person I would like to talk about is Kip. Kip is my daughter's grandfather. He gave me a chance to begin how to learn

carpentry. He has given me an experience that I will never forget - the experience that opened a window - no, a door - the door to my future in which I am going to renovate houses and run my own business.

I thank you all for helping me get unstuck and the new life. I couldn't have done it without all of you.

First Day of School *a teacher's point of view*

*It's unnerving the first time I step out of my car
and knock on your door.
Did I forget anything? Did I get the right house?
Will she like me? I knock again. Louder this time.
It's hard being the only teacher, I whine.*

*You open the door silently
I follow you in
Scanning the room
for a place to sit
You always say, "Excuse the mess,"
even when there isn't one.
I warn you there's a lot to "cover" this first day -
notebooks and rules and requirements and
forms - too many forms -
and I start to babble like a woman possessed
until*

*I glance up from my mound of papers
to see if you're listening any more than I am
and notice your eyes
fixed on your baby
still stretching inside its womb
making you anxious and dyspeptic
keeping you waiting
like you've never waited
or waking up with a distressed cry
from that soft newborn cloud
or crawling into the safety of your lap
to check out this stranger.*

*I see my broad smile and childlike giggle
surprise you
It's just good to know*

Senses

by Naomi Marr

I can remember smelling, feeling, tasting, seeing and hearing the pain of my heart.
The smell that was of a rotten carcass of the animal that was left behind,
The taste that was like curdled milk swishing around in my mouth,
I could see nothing but blackness over my eyes, as if I were a blind person with no sense of direction.
THUMP...THUMP... THUMP... my heart was beating so slow as if it wanted to give up on its own.
All the senses of knowing I was stuck, lost, and not knowing who I was.
Stuck in the mud up to my neck and sinking,
Lost as if someone left me stranded in the desert like the animal that was left behind.
The name Naomi - I knew the name, but who was she?
Out of nowhere there were hands reaching out.
Whose hands were these?
Why?
Why were they reaching out for me?
I am able to smell these smells, hear these sounds, feel these feelings, and taste something I have never tasted in my life.
I am seeing these smiles that are so warm and welcoming as if the sun were rising over the horizon welcoming me to a new day.
I didn't want to shy away from this warmth that's secure like a mother who swaddled her baby holding the child so tight and close to her heart.
I can smell the fresh air breeze that carries the ocean's unique smell passing by.
These voices,
Voices of wisdom are coming from the smiles I see.
I have come upon a face I have never seen.
He smiles a lot and talks so calmly
This man's touch is so warm and tender.
His lips are something I've never tasted before.
Our hearts beat together like two birds singing a melody.
I can see and feel the meaning to my life,
Now I know,
Know who she is,
Naomi. It's ME.

Misti Norwood



Misti trying out a new career with Claire at Veloute

I dropped out of school in January 2008. I was three months pregnant with my son and could no longer live where I was living. I moved in with my aunt, Patty Cunningham, in Searsmont. Patty and I talked about different ways to return back to school. I really wanted to go back to the high school where I was, but the drive wasn't possible. She told me about this Community School in Camden that was called the "Passages program." Both she and my sister graduated from there. She told me that this schooling consisted of multiple essays, community service and a final project. Sounded simple enough to me!

I called Martha Kempe and made an appointment to meet with her for more information on the Passages program. She came over in less than a week and made it sound like nothing. I insisted that my teacher be Janet Larkin - my sister had her and really enjoyed her. Come to find out, I was going to be stuck with her anyway.

I started the Passages program February 22, 2008. I stayed with it for a while and got my work done on time. Janet and I met every Thursday.

I moved out of Searsmont in February 09'. I moved to Warren with my stepmother

June 2010

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Kim. Work then became my top priority. I was about to get my own apartment and that meant buckling down and saving money!! School then became a matter of my schedule, but I still did it here and there. July came and I got my apartment and worked two jobs, so I took a lot of time off from school. Biggest mistake I could have done! I was almost done anyway.

2010 was here and Janet started hounding me about getting my schoolwork done! Being a procrastinator I still put it off. Then April was here and I still had things left and still didn't make an effort to finish them. I had to start my Passage if I was going to graduate. But, I didn't.

I then got a call from Martha! She pretty much told me to get my crap together or this isn't going to work! Following week I had everything going including my Passage! I can definitely say she scared me. Now I'm down to the last steps and on my way to graduate June 19th, 2010!!

I've recommended this school already and I'd do it again! This is by far the best program they could have for young parents, except when you are a procrastinator like me and need someone to give you a swift kick in the rear!

THANK YOU JANET AND MARTHA!



Misti's son Matthew