

What Happens When We Believe in Teen Moms

She Had a Baby. She Had a Dream. She Has a Future.

"In my culture, it is a shame for me and my family to have a baby at a young age," Kimmy remarked as she began her speech at graduation. "I lost all hope when I found out I was pregnant, and I thought I had ruined my future because my goal was to finish high school, then go to college, and get the job I always dreamed of, a nurse."



Valedictorian Kimmy gives her graduation speech.

Too often, when someone becomes a teen parent, the world decides their story is over. We've heard from many FloCrit students that the label of "teen mom" quickly becomes the focus, and attention shifts to what went wrong instead of who they are and all they're capable of achieving.

But class after class of Florence Crittenton High School graduates has shown us that being a teen mom doesn't mean giving up on your future. For Kimmy, having people who believed in her changed everything. At FloCrit, she found support for her basic needs, a school that believed in her goals, an Early Childhood Education Center that cared for her daughter, Katley, and a community that saw her potential and never treated her as a lost cause.

Now she's graduating as valedictorian. She's confident in herself and who she is as a mother. She's attending college in the fall. And Katley is thriving, too.

Kimmy is not the exception. Every graduate featured in this issue of "The Pathfinder" had moments when giving up might have seemed easier...but they didn't. With the right support, they've earned diplomas, planned for careers and college, and created strong futures for their families.

Teen parents are not broken. They are not burdens. They are capable, resilient people building better lives for themselves and their children. When we believe in their potential and invest in their success, the impact ripples beyond one family, creating stronger, more connected communities. This is the heart of FloCrit's mission: when teen moms rise, entire communities rise with them.

DESTA'S MESSAGE TO GRADUATES

Congratulations to the FloCrit Class of 2025!

I am here to celebrate you, acknowledge your incredible journeys, and leave you with a bit of wisdom to consider as you build your future. Here is what life has taught me:

1. Change is inevitable...be bold and lean into it. No matter the challenge, be excited about the muscles you will build through it because you are strong. Fear will try to steal your hope, but courage will inspire hope.
2. Celebrate and write down some of the hardest challenges you have overcome as a reminder of your strength.
3. Do your best to create a healthy community no matter where you go. It is in community where a sense of belonging is established and where loneliness and negative thinking can be dismantled and lose their power over you. It is within a community that networks are created, opportunities are identified, and support is made available.

Take advantage of each and every opportunity you get and make time to nurture relationships that build you up. Go out there and find out who you really are! I believe that if anyone can make their dreams come true, it's YOU! The FloCrit Phoenix moms. Congratulations on one of your many achievements to come!

Desti Taye-Channell



DESTA TAYE-CHANNELL, MA
PRESIDENT AND CEO

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Featuring the FloCrit Class of 2025

Valedictorian: Kimmy

Kimmy will be working and pursuing a career in pediatric nursing at Metropolitan State University of Denver after graduation. She will be a first generation college student and is excited for new opportunities.



“I did not give up on my education...I am proud of how hard I have worked to be the valedictorian of this class. And I feel good, I feel like I’m not just gonna sleep on this victory, and am going to move forward more and more and more.”

Kimmy was born in Vietnam and came to the USA when she was 12 years old. At 17, she thought that having a child was going to stop her. But her daughter, 9-month-old Katley, has taught her that she can do anything. “I think I can go with her instead of leave her behind or move forward alone,” Kimmy says. “I have her as a friend on my pathway.”



CEO Desta and Principal Howard cheer on the Class of 2025



Graduate Nevaeh R. receives a bouquet of roses.



Graduate Liliana proudly addresses her daughter, Yarezi.

Photo Credit: Noelle Williams Photography

“This milestone is not only a reflection of my dedication but also a starting point for my nursing pathway.”

Ashley and her 17-month-old son, Zacari, have been attending FloCrit ever since Zacari was 6 weeks old. She is a driven and kind student and mother, and was awarded the “My Plan DPS”

Student Achievement Award from Denver Public Schools. She says

that the FloCrit community

“has been incredibly supportive, providing not just academic help but also a sense

of care and connection, making it easier to focus on my academic goals while balancing motherhood.”

She wants her son to know that “even

on the hardest days, if you believe in yourself just a little, it’s enough to keep on going.”



Salutatorian: Ashley

Ashley will be pursuing a nursing career by earning an Associate’s from the Community College of Denver and then transferring to Metropolitan State University for her Bachelor’s degree.





Liliana A.

Liliana was a bit nervous when she first came to FloCrit, but she persisted and is now excited to take this big step to start her future. She hopes that her 2-year-old daughter, Angelina, grows up to never give up, just like her mom. She plans to work and train to become a CNA.



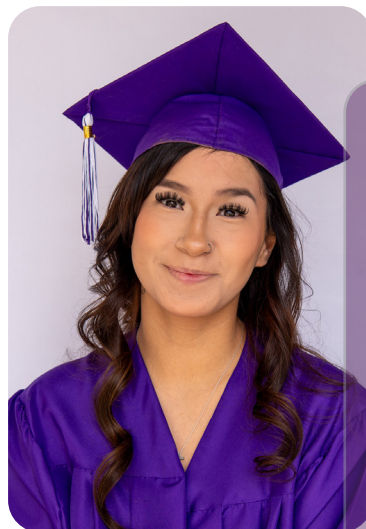
Analise

Graduating to Analise means "I am capable of anything I put my mind to." Mother to 2-year-old Athena, Analise has built strong friendships at FloCrit. She plans to join the Navy and attend EMT school. Analise wants her daughter to know she'll be successful no matter what life throws at her.



Quneitra

Quneitra is excited to take this next step in life and to get a job after graduating. At FloCrit, she's learned to "keep going" and has loved meeting many new people. She's also very proud of the person her 5-year-old daughter, Royalty, has become.



Kasondra

"Regardless of having a baby young, I still did it and graduated." Kasondra is the proud mother to baby Ariella, and will be attending the Community College of Denver to pursue a degree in Criminology. She wants her daughter to know to just keep swimming when things get hard.



Leanne

Mother to 2-year-old Isabella, Leanne is excited to graduate and get another job. She is grateful for all of the teachers and staff that helped her and her daughter, and has learned to "never give up, keep trying to succeed."



Neveah L.

"If it wasn't for me having my son, I would never have had the courage and strength to pull myself together." Neveah, mom to 1-year-old Legend, is proud to have proven she can finish school. She will be attending Emily Griffith Technical College to become an esthetician.

**Featured Graduate:
Yenni**

Yenni always dreamed of becoming a lawyer, despite being told she couldn't do that as a teen mom. She made it her mission to prove them wrong, and will be starting classes at the Community College of Denver this fall.



"I think FloCrit doesn't really judge you about what your life is. They actually help you try and figure out whatever you want to be in the future, and try to push you on in that path."

Yenni came to Florence Crittenton Services when she was 12 years old. Her first year was filled with challenges—she struggled academically and nearly failed the 7th grade. But in a moment of defiance against everything she'd been told about who she would become, Yenni returned to school and tested out of all her 7th grade classes. "I think that was when I realized that I could do whatever I felt in my heart, and not just say 'I cannot do it,' or just give up. That showed me I could do whatever I wanted." Her 4-year-old daughter, Melany, has been by her side every step of the way.



FloCrit High School teachers pose for a photo.



Nevaeh L. receives her diploma from principal Josh Howard.



Graduate Natalie and her daughter, Arleth.

Photo Credit: Noelle Williams Photography

"I'm proud of myself. I feel like I taught my siblings that if I did it, they could."

At first, Alyssa didn't know what it would look like to be a mom and go to school, especially without much support at home. But at FloCrit, she found a strong community of people who believe in her potential to thrive. Alyssa and her 1-year-old son, Jeremiah, were even featured in this year's graduation billboards!



One specific moment she recalls is from last Christmas: Alyssa's apartment was robbed, and all their presents were stolen. She contacted her

Family Advocate, Kimble, and "they were able to pay my rent.

They gave me all kinds of gifts. They saved that holiday. They saved Christmas, literally." Even in the toughest moments, Alyssa found strength in the community around her and forged her own path forward with support from FloCrit.

**Featured Graduate:
Alyssa**

Alyssa will be attending the Community College of Denver to study Early Childhood Education. She hopes to become an elementary school teacher so that she can positively influence kids' lives and share her life lessons.





Kali

"I'm going to keep working for me and my son to have an amazing, peaceful life together." Kali is mother to 1-year-old Ezileo. She will be attending cosmetology school, is proud to be graduating high school, and is grateful for her teachers at FloCrit.



Liliana M

Liliana is the mother of 2-year-old Yaretzi. At FloCrit, she learned "that patience is something you should always have, even when it feels like you have none left." She will be attending cosmetology school and wants her daughter to never stop fighting for what she wants or believes in.



Star

Star is the mother to 5-year-old Valentino, who is also graduating from FloCrit's ECE and will be attending kindergarten in the fall. Star will continue working at an assisted living home and will continue her career in the medical field.



Natalie

Natalie is the mother to 1-year-old Arleth, and says that her daughter motivated her "to do better and graduate high school. Thanks to her, I am the person I am now." Natalie plans to become a medical assistant after graduation.



Sarahi

"No matter what happens in life, you will eventually make it." Sarahi is the mother to 3-year-old Erick, who she hopes will always be himself and try his hardest. Sarahi plans to work as a medical assistant after graduation.



Daniela

Daniela is the mother to 5-month-old Anna Marie. She plans to become a nurse, and has learned that even while facing challenges "you gotta keep going." Daniela is grateful for all of the support at FloCrit and wants her daughter to know that she's doing it all for her.



Lizeth

"I'm showing my daughter that I never gave up." Lizeth is the mother to 4-year-old Violeta. She plans to become a nurse after graduating and is grateful for her teachers at Florence Crittenton High School.



Nevaeh R.

Nevaeh is the mother of 2-year-old Luna and twin boys Nikko and Niamiah (born in April). She will be attending Emily Griffith Technical College to become a dental assistant, and is grateful for "all of the support from diapers to rent assistance and just having someone to come to for help."



Ariyanna

Mother to 3-year-old Joziah, Ariyanna is grateful for "all the opportunities I've been offered the past four years." In 2023, she traveled to Australia for the Youth Leadership & Business Summit alongside a FloCrit alumna and staff member.



Jaide

"It's never too late to get back on track." Jaide is proud of this huge accomplishment, and plans to attend the Community College of Denver for their LPN program. She is the proud mother to 3-year-old Jaylana, and is grateful for the opportunities at FloCrit.



Delany

"I am able to do the things I want if I just try and never quit!" Delany is proud that she never gave up and earned her diploma. Her favorite thing about FloCrit was having the support to cope with the loss of her child, who she misses deeply.



Chardon'ae

"I've learned to persevere and strive for the best." Chardon'ae says that her 2-year-old son, Khalon, is the reason she returned to high school to earn her diploma. She's motivated to build a great life for both of them, and plans to build a career as an OBGYN sonographer.

Volunteer Spotlight: Ray Nelson

Baby Bucks is FloCrit's on-site basic needs store for teen parents and alumni, offering free essentials like diapers, wipes, clothes, and more. Some high-demand items, like new toys or bulk diapers, can be "purchased" with Baby Bucks, a special currency students earn by taking surveys, helping friends, donating gently used baby items, or showing leadership on campus. This unique system helps teen families meet basic needs so they can stay focused on school and building strong futures.

As Class of 2025 graduate Chardon'ae Stone puts it, "I use Baby Bucks all the time. I feel like Baby Bucks is the GOAT to all the services. Everybody uses Baby Bucks."

Behind the shelves and carefully sorted bins are the volunteers who make it all possible. One of those volunteers is Ray Nelson, who has been showing up every week for the past year and a half.

Ray first got involved in December 2023 through our Holiday Giving Drive. After helping sort gifts for teen parents, he started volunteering weekly in Baby Bucks and quickly became a familiar and friendly face. "I keep things organized, so when they're looking for something, they know which section to go to," Ray says.

Thank you to Ray and all of our amazing volunteers for helping make Baby Bucks the "GOAT" that it is! Interested in getting involved? Ray says, "I would definitely highly recommend it, and I would just tell them that you'll really enjoy it. And what makes it very enjoyable is all the people, they make you feel very warm inside and everything."

Join our team of amazing volunteers! Learn more at flocritco.org/volunteer.



Volunteer Ray hangs up clothes in Baby Bucks.

**Click here
to learn
more about
volunteering
at FloCrit!**



Maxine and Candi (Class of 2020) pose for a photo with Maxine's daughters.

the Class of 2020, who were finally able to take a group photo after missing that milestone during the pandemic.

This gathering was a reminder that FloCrit's support doesn't end at graduation. Everyone who finishes high school at FloCrit joins a lasting community of teen mothers who continue to show up for themselves and for each other.

FloCrit Alumni Reconnect at the Denver Botanic Gardens

FloCrit's Student & Alumni Engagement Committee hosted an alumni event in June at the Denver Botanic Gardens, bringing together graduates from a wide range of class years. The gardens offered a chance to slow down, connect, and reflect. One highlight of the event was the reunion of



6 members of the FloCrit Class of 2020 pose for a photo.

Sliding into Kindergarten

Congrats to Valentino, Tierra, and Valeria for graduating from FloCrit's ECE! We know you're ready for kindergarten but hope kindergarten is ready for you!



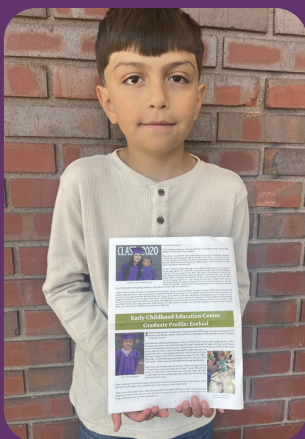
ECE Alum Profile: Zeke

Back in the July 2020 issue of The Pathfinder, we featured Zeke as he graduated from FloCrit's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program and prepared to start kindergarten. Zeke had been part of the ECE since he was just six weeks old, learning and growing in FloCrit's ECE classrooms while his mom, Cheyenne (FloCrit Class of 2020) worked toward her high school diploma just steps across campus.

Five years later, we caught up with Cheyenne and 9-year-old Zeke, who's now heading into fourth grade. Even though he doesn't remember much from his early days at FloCrit, the foundation built during those years is still showing up in his success today.

"When Zeke was a year, he was speaking full sentences," Cheyenne shares. "I truly believe it's because he was here." Now, she says, "He does really well. He exceeds in everything academically. He has very high test scores every time he tests, and his teachers are always proud to share his grades."

Zeke says that he likes school and playing sports with his friends. His class even went to the Butterfly Pavilion last year because they were doing a butterfly project! However, his favorite subject is lunch because "on Wednesdays you get pizza, and they make huge pizzas for us." If Zeke could be any animal, it would be a silverback gorilla because he would be "super strong and mighty and eat lots of fruits."



Zeke shows off his feature in the July 2020 Pathfinder

Pathways to Empowerment: Manifesting Abundance

On April 24th at the Denver Art Museum, we welcomed over 400 guests to Pathways to Empowerment: Manifesting Abundance. This year's theme highlighted the shift from a scarcity mindset—rooted in stress and survival—to one of abundance, marked by empowerment and opportunity.

Our featured exhibit this year was a display of vision boards made by FloCrit teen moms. Fittingly showcased in the Denver Art Museum, the exhibit honored their creativity and dreams in a space dedicated to art. Many moms were proud to learn their work was displayed in a real museum; some were even there to share and celebrate their boards. Each vision board offered a powerful, personal glimpse into what abundance looks like through their eyes.

The program also celebrated two champions of our mission. Rebecca Alexander, a former FloCrit board member, received the Dr. Kate Waller Barrett Advocate Award in recognition of her key role in establishing and

supporting the FloCrit Legal Clinic. U.S. Bank was honored with the Charles Crittenton Community Partner Award for their generous financial support and commitment to building community-based solutions for teen families.

Recent graduate Analise (Class of 2025) and alumna Amanda (Class of 2023) shared their powerful stories, describing how FloCrit's comprehensive campus became a safe, supportive place where they could access education, childcare, mental health care, housing, and essential



Amanda and Analise share their stories side by side.

resources—all in one location. Like many FloCrit families, once their basic needs were met, they could start to move from surviving to thriving: earning diplomas, pursuing careers, and building stable futures for their children.

President & CEO Desta Taye-Channell closed the evening by unveiling her Big Bold Vision for FloCrit's future (see page 10).

Thanks to the generosity of our community, Pathways to Empowerment: Manifesting Abundance raised \$233,000 to support our mission of educating, preparing, and empowering teen moms and their children.



FloCrit staff and students pose together.

[Click here to view more photos from Pathways to Empowerment.](#)

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Bridging the Gap: Why Teen Families Need More Than a Diploma

Over the past four decades, FloCrit's wraparound services have walked alongside teen mothers in completing high school and preparing their children for kindergarten. Yet even as we serve more teen families, their challenges have grown more complex, and the gap to financial independence, housing stability, and higher education continues to widen. This underscores the urgent need for responsive, sustained support that adapts to the evolving needs FloCrit families face.

Since 2017, FloCrit has conducted housing needs assessments for teen families, leading to the launch of our Housing Program in 2021, when 99% of families reported housing instability. In response, FloCrit created comprehensive solutions: helping teen families apply for housing vouchers, resolve rental debt, move into supportive housing, and avoid eviction through landlord negotiations. By 2023, the housing instability percentage dropped to 73%. We knew students couldn't succeed in school without feeling safe at home or having their basic needs met. Housing became the foundation upon which every other goal stood.

But while this progress is meaningful, it's only part of the story. Through honest conversations, lived experiences, and ongoing assessments, we've heard a clear message from the teen parents we serve: they need more than what we currently offer to truly thrive.

Teen mothers supported by FloCrit are resilient, visionary, and fiercely committed to building strong, healthy lives for their children and themselves. Inspired by their determination, we are stepping forward with a Bold Vision to provide housing directly through FloCrit.

Teen Parent Housing Basic Needs Assessment

Explore our Housing Needs Assessment presented by Madison Caparros, Housing Manager, and Donica Snyder, Director of SFSP, to learn more about our research and proposed solutions from the teen parents we serve.

Click here to view
the assessment!

Across seven formal evaluations conducted over the past three fiscal years, teen parents have shared the following priorities:

- Develop Specialized Housing Programs:** Create housing programs and developments specifically for teen parents that include supportive services such as childcare, employment assistance, and educational programs.
- Parents would like FloCrit to use **youth co-design practices and hire alumni** to shape services, especially in workforce and housing programs.
- Strengthen Family Advocate relationships**, which parents identify as the linchpin of their success.
- Expand access to clinical services**, which help parents feel more confident using available resources.

Teen parents have made it clear: they need a housing community with wraparound support built specifically for them. These are not luxuries; they are what teen families say are essential to unlocking futures full of promise.

Our vision is rooted in the belief that teen moms deserve every opportunity to thrive. We're expanding our support to remove the biggest barriers standing in their way—providing tools they need to not only graduate high school, but also the foundation to begin building generational success, a cycle of strength, and hope for their children.

At FloCrit, we don't just believe in teen mothers—we stand with them. We listen, we act, and we walk alongside them as they create brighter futures.

Now, we invite you to stand with us as we take the next steps toward a Bold Vision for teen families. This is just the beginning. We'll be sharing more soon, including opportunities to be a part of this growing vision.



FloCrit staff member Lexi records student feedback during a lunchtime listening session.

Thought Leaders in Action

FloCrit staff do more than offer wraparound support for teen parents in the Denver metro area. They're also helping shape the national conversation. Drawing from their hands-on experience with teen families, many team members have been invited to present at conferences across the country over the past year. These opportunities highlight our team's expertise and position FloCrit as a thought leader and trusted voice on issues related to empowering teen parents. Take a look at some of the conferences where we've shared our work or will be presenting soon:

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations

Donica Snyder, Director of SFSP

In a session titled "Redefining 'Good' Data," Donica presented alongside FloCrit partner Caring for Denver and shared how a grantee partnership model can transform philanthropic evaluation. She emphasized the importance of centering community voices in defining and measuring impact, and how that reshapes evaluation in nonprofits.



MDHI COC Convening Day

Madison Caparros, Housing Manager

Lucia Barton-Diaz, Bilingual Housing Stability Specialist

Madison and Lucia spoke at the Metro Denver Housing Initiative's first-ever Continuum of Care Convening Day and presented on Authentic Youth Collaboration.

National Symposium for Ending Youth Homelessness

Madison Caparros, Housing Manager

Danessa Garcia-Gallegos, AmeriCorps VISTA

This coming October, Madison and Danessa will be panelists for a workshop on flexible cash assistance and will talk about FloCrit's partnership with U.S. Bank.

Postpartum Support International Conference & Denver Health Didactic

Laura Rivera, Bilingual Clinical Mental Health Manager

Brooke Kimball, Parent Educator

Laura and Brooke will be presenting for the second year in a row on "Educating, Preparing and Empowering a Two Generation Model" at the PSI Conference in New Orleans. They also spoke at Denver Health's Didactic for health professionals to spread awareness and information about maternal mental health for teens.

Click here to read FloCrit's blog post on maternal mental health featuring Laura and Brooke.



Play Therapy:

Laura Rivera, FloCrit's Bilingual Clinical Mental Health Manager and Registered Play Therapist, is leading research as part of FloCrit's new Play Therapy program. The study focuses on services for Spanish-speaking families, and the findings will be published in 2027–2028.

AmeriCorps at FloCrit

This year, we were fortunate to host three incredible AmeriCorps members through long-time FloCrit partner: Colorado Youth for a Change. These three staff members brought their passion and dedication to the FloCrit community, and their impact is evident in the teen families they supported through their unique roles:

"I feel like my work has supported young parents and their children by helping ease some of the stress and barriers that can make life even more overwhelming than it already is. Whether it's doing a student's dishes, helping them get birth certificates for themselves and their child, or stocking their new home with essentials, I focus on the little things that tend to pile up.

AmeriCorps support is essential for nonprofits like FloCrit because it helps fill important gaps and expands the network of people available to support students... Without AmeriCorps partners at FloCrit, there would be real gaps in the supportive services we provide."

"The part of FloCrit's mission that has resonated with me most is the idea of empowerment. I have enjoyed getting to support our moms in a way that equips them with skills and confidence that they can carry outside of their time at FloCrit... Moms may come to me needing help making a doctor appointment, filing a court case, or seeking support in talking to their baby's teacher. Instead of doing these tasks for them, I empower my moms with the tools they need to have these difficult conversations (ex. questions to ask, paperwork needed) and stand next to them as they make their call or have their conversation."

"Being an alumni, I wanted to give back to my community here at FloCrit. AmeriCorps VISTA provided me the opportunity to do that... My days here at FloCrit are never consistent, which I love. Some days I'm doing a lot of research and meetings in collaboration with my team, and others I'm going to conferences and workforce workshops, auditing them, and seeing if what they have to offer makes sense for our parents... VISTA members are instrumental in helping nonprofits like FloCrit build the internal capacity needed to address community needs and strengthen communities effectively."



Kate Nixon
AmeriCorps Engagement
Support Member



Alexis Krupa
AmeriCorps Engagement
Support Member



Danessa Garcia-Gallegos
Youth Workforce Program
Developer VISTA



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