



PRESS RELEASE

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FROM FOSTER CHILD TO CHILD ADVOCATE

FT LAUDERDALE, FL – Latoya Richardson, Child Advocate has had first hand experience with the child welfare system even before deciding to pursue social work as a profession. Prior to pursuing her passion of making a difference in the lives of Broward’s abused, abandoned and neglected youth, Latoya was a foster child in the dependency system.

In 1995 Latoya Richardson, a native of Jamaica, migrated to South Florida to live with her father and stepmother. It was not long after her arrival that Latoya would suffer sexual abuse at the hands of her father. The abuse would continue for much of her early high school years until young Latoya mustered up the strength to tell her stepmother of the abuse. The stepmother immediately relocated with Latoya and her younger sister. Although she continued to live with her stepmother, their relationship quickly turned sour. In an effort to find a healthy environment for herself, she turned to the local child welfare agency to intervene.

Throughout her time in foster care, Latoya was impressed and influenced by the dedication and compassion of two of her case managers. “Jetta LaFrance and Tangi Bates were always there to support and encourage me,” said Latoya “They were not only committed to doing a good job but dedicated to helping me at a very difficult time in my life.” Despite her difficult childhood, she was determined to not only complete high school but graduate from college. Immediately after high school graduation, she enrolled in an Associate program for Social Work at Broward Community College. Latoya furthered her education in Social Work at Florida Atlantic University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Social Work. Although she had a brief interest in working with the homeless, she ultimately decided to work within the dependency system as a Child Advocate. “I wanted to be able to help a child that may be in a similar situation,” said Latoya “It is very important for me to be able to give back to my community and make a difference in the life of a child.”

Today, Latoya is living out her dream to positively impact Broward’s most vulnerable children. She works as a Child Advocate at ChildNet’s South Service Center, where she manages the cases of 11 families. She is truly a testament to the fact that you can overcome a painful past and use your experiences to help others. “There is nothing that can’t be accomplished with resiliency, determination and focus,” said Latoya Richardson.

ChildNet is the private, not for profit organization selected by the state through a competitive process to serve as the local Community Based Care lead agency. As the lead agency, ChildNet manages the local system of services and supports for Broward’s abused, abandoned and neglected children and their caregivers. This system of care was developed by the community and its success depends upon the community’s continued support. For more information on ChildNet visit the Web site at www.ChildNet.us or call (954) 414-6000.

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