

Learning Together Profile – Alana

“I Get Job Experience Here”



Participants in **Learning Together**, the program for teen mothers at the Parent Child Center, develop job skills by working each weekday within the center—in the infant and toddler rooms, the kitchen, reception desk and the thrift store, Myrtle’s Closet.

Sometimes a mother makes a special connection with a worksite. That’s what happened with Alana and Myrtle’s Closet.

The mother of a four-year-old boy, Alana lights up when she shows off the store’s neat displays that she helped organize, the back-room bags of donated clothing she helped sort, and the appealing decorations she helped put up.

“I love my worksite,” she says. “I get job experience here, and I feel more sure of myself. There’s something about it! I just really like being here.”

Before Alana became pregnant at 16, she was struggling with depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. She had been through rehab and had dropped out of high school. Then, when her son was nine months old, she got involved with **Learning Together**.

“I’m more confident about myself and the things I do,” Alana says now. She spends her afternoons in **Learning Together’s** high-school program, working to earn her diploma this school year. She has mentored two mothers who are newer participants.

“You teach them how to do things, and how to communicate with co-workers,” she explains. “If they make a mistake, I give them a positive before I give a negative, so there don’t feel bad about themselves.”

Today, Alana has her own apartment – and she has a goal. She would like to become a drug and alcohol counselor for teens. “I’ve always been a very caring person, and I can relate to them,” she says. “I’ve been through a lot.”

Getting her counseling credential, she has learned, will require five years of higher education. In the meantime, there’s the thrift store. “It’s really neat!” We get a lot of compliments,” Alana says. “I go to lots of thrift stores, and I don’t think I’ve seen one that’s as well-organized as ours.”

