

## Learning Together Profile - Amanda



### *"I Wanted to Prove I Could Do It"*

When Amanda came to **Learning Together**, a program for teen mothers at the Parent Child Center, she had a baby daughter, little self-esteem, and a lot of fear.

"I felt my life was over," she remembers.

**Learning Together** brings teenage moms together for mutual support, to provide childcare when needed to build workplace skills, and to educational goals. At first, Amanda was shy – "I kind of stood by myself. But then I pushed myself to make friends. The staff supported me a lot."

She had left high school at 16. But when **Learning Together** coordinator Julie Merrill sat down with her to set some goals, Amanda shared a dream. She wanted to be a nurse. She tended to put herself down, and wasn't sure she should try. The center staff urged her to go for it. Amanda enrolled in a ten-week program for certification as a Licensed Nursing Assistant.

It's a lot of work, but I kept on going," she says, "I wanted to prove to my parents that I could do it. Prove them wrong."

Finishing the course, she took state certification exams, and then waited for the results, convinced she had failed. Finally she called in. "They told me I had passed. I said, 'Are you sure you've got the right person?' "When I got back to the parent child center, they'd put up a sign: 'Congratulations Amanda on passing your boards!'"

A framed copy of Amanda's LNA certification hangs in the **Learning Together** classroom, on a wall display of participant's diplomas. This school year, through the LT program, she will graduate from Springfield High School. Next she'd like to work in her field for a year or so -- then go back to school.

"This was the first time I've reached a big goal," she says. "Next I'm going to go for my LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse)." Eventually she hopes to work with babies and young children as a physician's assistant.

"I'm not going to stop moving up," Amanda says.

