



# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## 19 Teen Moms Defy Odds and Grab Diplomas at Florence Crittenton School 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commencement

### *Three-quarters of Class of 2010 plan postsecondary education*

**DENVER – May 25, 2010** – “We did it, ladies!” student speaker Aushena Williams triumphantly declared to the Florence Crittenton School’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary graduating class at commencement ceremonies at Central Presbyterian Church. “We are lawyers, nurses, CEOs, doctors – the world is ours!”

Aushena, the mother of one-year-old Azhya, was one of 19 teen mothers to defy the odds and receive their high school diplomas at the ceremony on Saturday, May 22, 2010. Two years ago, Aushena was attending George Washington High School when she found out she was pregnant. She transferred to Florence Crittenton, an alternative school for pregnant and parenting teens operated by the nonprofit Parent Pathways in partnership with Denver Public Schools, and traded in parties and fun for nighttime feedings.

“One thing I would not trade in is my baby,” Aushena told her classmates. This articulate young mother, who picked up the \$1,000 Zonta Club of Denver II Sue Burch Scholarship, plans to begin college in the fall and eventually “start a nonprofit providing service to teen moms and felons.” The other student speakers were Maria Arteaga and Maria Garcia.

Fifteen of the 19 Class of 2010 grads, about half of whom are the first in their family to graduate from high school, have plans for post-secondary education. Such goals are extraordinary for this group of determined young women who have overcome the odds of teen pregnancy, and in most cases poverty, to finish high school thanks to wraparound support provided by Parent Pathways.

Other Class of 2010 scholarship winners:

- **Jessica Ramirez** won a one-year scholarship to the Community College of Denver through the Metropolitan Mayor's and Commissioners Youth Award, and a \$900 scholarship from the Rotary Club of Denver, renewable for an additional year.
- **Ashlee Cooper** was named a Mile High Scholar by the City and County of Denver, and received an \$875 Goodwill scholarship and a \$500 Robert Glenn Jensen Scholarship.
- **Wendy Barron** was awarded a \$900 scholarship from the Rotary Club of Denver, renewable for an additional year, and a \$500 Robert Glenn Jensen Scholarship.
- **Maria Garcia** and **Kristin Ayon** each won a Robert Glenn Jensen Scholarship, worth \$500.
- **Jennifer Castillo** won a \$1,000 Comcast scholarship.

The Florence Crittenton School opened in 1984, three years after the Florence Crittenton Home closed its doors after 88 years

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giving unwed mothers a place to live and deliver their babies before giving them up for adoption. The school, created in response to high dropout rates among teen mothers and a high incidence of low birth-weight babies, was originally named the Teen Parent Education Network. (Watch the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary video at [http://www.parentpathways.org/videos/Parent\\_Pathways\\_2009\\_video.wmv](http://www.parentpathways.org/videos/Parent_Pathways_2009_video.wmv).)

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year was launched with a ribbon-cutting on the first day of school last August, and celebrated during special events throughout the school year, including the Florence Crittenton School's annual reunion/homecoming in October and the "Miles for Moms" Run/Walk on May 8, 2010.

The largest provider of services to teen mothers in Denver, the Florence Crittenton School serves about 200 pregnant and parenting teens each year, helping them finish high school, give birth to healthy babies, learn how to be nurturing mothers, prevent repeat pregnancies, obtain post-secondary education and acquire marketable job skills and work experience.

**About Parent Pathways**

Parent Pathways is a Denver-based nonprofit that empowers teen families to be productive members of the community. Using a holistic and proven approach, Parent Pathways offers a spectrum of wraparound services for the entire teen family, including education, career guidance and parenting training for pregnant and parenting teen mothers at the Florence Crittenton School; early childhood education for their babies and toddlers at the Qualistar-rated Early Learning Center; and counseling, education and parenting support for teen fathers through the Young Fathers Program. Learn more at [www.parentpathways.org](http://www.parentpathways.org).

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*NOTE: Student speeches can viewed on the Parent Pathways' YouTube Channel, <http://www.youtube.com/user/parentpathways>. Photos are available upon request.*