



## MEET SHONTALE

My name Shontale and I am 18 years of age. I have been in foster care since I was 2 year old. I recently graduated from Milpitas High School, which was a huge accomplishment for me. I was not able to participate in the graduation ceremonies because 5 days before the end of school, I broke up a fight between 2 girls. Milpitas High School has a no tolerance policy so I was suspended from school for 5 days – the rest of the school year. I was extremely upset about the situation because I have worked hard to get my high school diploma. Only 10% of the kids who have grown up in foster care system graduate from high school so I was working against the odds. My situation was covered by the San Jose Mercury News and Channel 11 News; in hopes that the Milpitas School Board would change their mind and allow me to participate in the graduation ceremonies. Even with all the media coverage, the School Board denied my request. I did attend the ceremonies but had to sit in the stands with the parents and families. I wanted to be there to support my friends. I am still very proud of my accomplishments and know that I will continue forward to better my life.

After high school, I would like to continue my education and attend a community college. It is my goal to get a degree in Social Work so I can help out other foster kids. My life has not been an easy one. I have been in so many foster care homes that I have lost track of the number. I was abused by one foster care family and have lived on streets of Oakland. For the past 2 years, I lived with my foster mother, who I call Auntie, and 5 other foster kids in Milpitas. My Auntie has been very supportive of my goals and has really help me in getting my diploma.

As of August 2009, I will need to leave my current home to start my life as an adult. The State will provide me with transitional housing. I would like to enroll in a community college full-time, which I hope to get grants to help with educational costs. I will need to get a part-time job so I can earn some income for expenses. I do not have driver's license because I cannot afford a car. I rely strictly on public transportation to get around the city.

Human Connexus has opened up an educational fund in my name to help cover the cost of tuition, books and expenses. I really appreciate the support and know that I will be able to help out others once I graduate from college.

Sincerely,

Shontale

### Update on Shontale:

- Shontale completed her first semester at DeAnze College with passing grades.
- She left the transitional housing program in December and is no longer getting State assistance
- She moved to the east bay to be closer to friends.
- She did not enroll in college for the spring semester
- She still wants to pursue her education but needs some time to determine her next steps.