



A WINNING TEAM

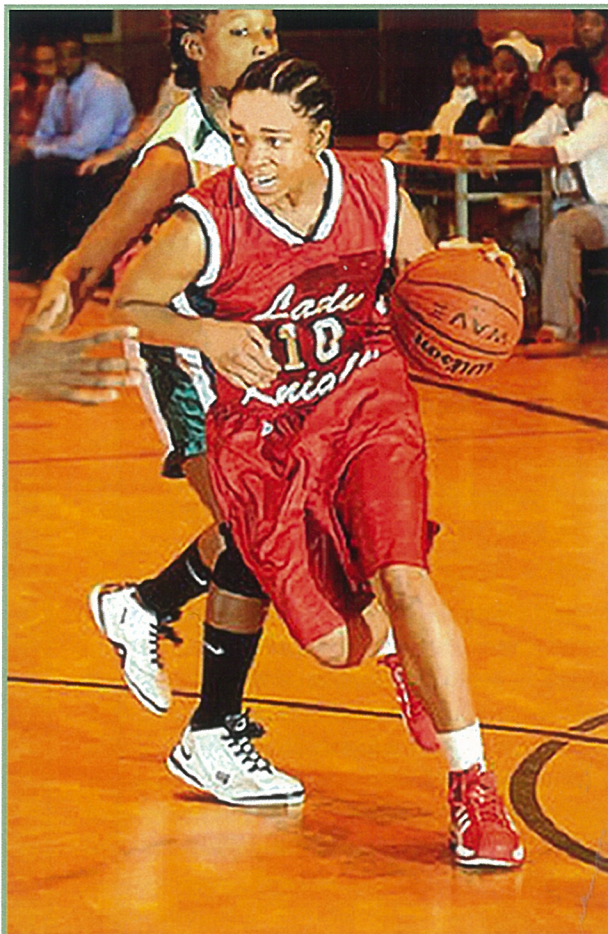
Not your average high schooler, Jazzarae, or "Jazz" for short, has been through a lot. She became a member of the ESS family in October 2008 after being referred to Episcopal Social Services by the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS). Her mother had a long battle with drug addiction and spent fourteen years in prison.

Her mother was clean for the first three years of Jazz's life, but she simply could not fully overcome her dependence on drugs. Throughout her childhood, Jazz witnessed drug binges, strangers coming and going, items being stolen from her apartment, and no food in the refrigerator. She was often left to fend for herself. As a preteen, Jazz mustered the courage to tell her older sister, Eileen, who was in her late 30s at the time, that she needed to get out. Eileen welcomed her into her home. Eileen, who was a single mom

herself, explains, "It was a rough ride, but we managed to remain positive and live together as a family." During this time, Jazz was also fortunate to find refuge in the game of basketball which gave her strength and determination.

Jazz tried to have a relationship with her mother, but quickly realized that she couldn't. At one point her mother's run-ins with the police resulted in a padlocked apartment, leaving Jazz with no access to the new school clothes she bought for herself with the hard earned money she saved. Her anger and resentment about the situation caused her school to contact ACS, who referred the case to ESS.

Thankfully, she had a dedicated sister in Eileen who was willing to officially become her foster parent. ESS was able to provide Jazz money for clothing, a monthly stipend for other necessities, and even paid her senior dues, ring cost, and prom ticket. She also received proper medical attention,



including all necessary vaccinations. "I believe that just knowing that we can call ESS for any issue that may arise has allowed a burden to be lifted off of us and has allowed Jazzarae to finally function as a normal teenager – one that should not have had to grow up as fast as she did," Eileen explained.

Currently a senior at John F. Kennedy High School in the Bronx, pursuing her New York State Regents Diploma, Jazz excels in all her classes and is admired by teachers and classmates alike. She also serves as Vice President of the Senior Council and is a member of the Hispanic Society. This year she was captain of the Varsity Girls Basketball Team, *The Lady Knights*, and recently made the All Bronx 1st Team (while her coach was designated "Coach of the Year"). When she's not busy with school and basketball, Jazz

attends various workshops about sexual health, financial planning, college preparation, as well as day trips offered by ESS.

It doesn't stop there. Jazz also plans for an even brighter future. Recently accepted at Alfred State College - SUNY College of Technology, she will major in Engineering or Forensic Science. She remains devoted to her family, performing household chores and serving as a wonderful role model for her nephew. Both Jazz and Eileen look forward to Jazz learning about independent living through ESS, as this will be her first time away from home. Regardless of where Jazz's journey takes her, Eileen looks back on her experience and says, "It has been absolutely a joy raising my little sister and I would not have had it any other way."

ESS congratulates Jazz and wishes her continued success both on and off the court.