

## Holly's Story:

“Growing up, my grandmother was a constant support in my life. My grandmother was tough, and I respected her from the time I was a little kid. When I was young, and then when I was a teenager, things were not easy. There were definitely times when I felt like nothing was going right, but no matter how I felt about myself or how bad a situation seemed, my grandmother always believed in me way more than I even believed in myself. I got through high school ok, but I went a little off the rails in college. I ended up going to a lot of parties, and making some choices I can think better of now. I ended up pregnant with my first daughter before I could finish school and graduate. I thought to myself, “This is it for me. I’ll have to drop out and work somewhere I don’t want to, but I have to do this to take care of my daughter.” It would be me taking care of her alone, and I didn’t know what else to do. I was eighteen and it seemed like the only way- I was totally giving up on myself.

But my grandmother hadn’t given up. She would call me by my first and middle name, so I knew she was serious, and she told me that no matter how challenging it would be, I had to finish school. I had to chase what I was passionate about, and that even though it would be more work now, my daughter and I would both be happier for it later. Because my grandmother had that faith in me, I powered through and got my degree, and I’m so thankful that I did. Looking back on those days now, I can see how strong I was, and I can see what my grandmother saw in me. Now, I hope to give that same strength to my daughters to carry forward with them in life.”