



I am WAGES®

Naukisha Wray-Darity

“I don’t always look back at my own journey. Doing so lets me know I’ve been through a lot and I made it. I’m still making it. I’ll have my Bachelor’s degree soon!” Naukisha Wray-Darity is now back in school after many years without the financial means to do so. She had exhausted her pell grant and federal funding on past education and her center was not originally participating on the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program because they did not fully understand how cost-effective it could be. Things are different now.

Naukisha teaches in the center her sister owns. Her sister tried to convince Naukisha to join her in the early childhood field when she first opened her program, but it wasn’t until after Naukisha had her son that she realized she had a gift. She created learning tools for him and her nephew and was helping them both learn through play. She decided she could help other children, too. She started working in the afterschool program and then became the full-time teacher for 3- and 4-year olds. “I fell in love with it,” she said.

Although Naukisha had already earned a two-year degree in another field, her success working with children made her want to share and learn more, so she completed her associate degree in Early Childhood Education and enough coursework to earn additional degrees, including an associate in Special Education. But that wasn’t enough. “I preach to my children all the time about the importance of college and degrees, and I wanted to meet the same standard I was setting for them.” The problem was finding the money to do it once her other options were exhausted. She said, “We really didn’t understand T.E.A.C.H. – what the percentages meant.” After talking with another participating center, they decided to give it a try.

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--Naukisha Wray-Darity

Now Naukisha is on a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship and she continues to receive her Child Care WAGES® supplements. She has been on WAGES since 2009, with ever-increasing supplement awards that reflected her ongoing education. “WAGES has helped me want to continue on with school,” Naukisha shared. “As a single mom at the time, my checks have helped me pay for child care and feed my kids. It helped me pay for books and classes. I don’t know what it hasn’t helped me do! Without WAGES, it would be hard to stay in the business even though I love it. It has saved me from leaving the industry. I remember when my boys were starting school one year and I didn’t have the funds to buy what they needed. I had no idea how I was going to get through it. That Saturday, the WAGES check came. It was like Christmas because I could make sure my children had what they needed. They didn’t understand how hard things were for me.”

Child Care
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Program

Naukisha uses her story to provide encouragement to other teachers in her child care program.

“It gives them hope.”