



...Because every child deserves a childhood

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Astor shepherds students all the way to high school graduation *Five reach milestone, overcoming long odds*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

BRONX, NY – Like every other parent at high school commencement ceremonies this spring, Eve Murphy watched with pride as her daughter, Cheyenne, clutched her diploma. But Murphy said she was especially proud of her daughter’s accomplishment, because few students had overcome as much as she had.

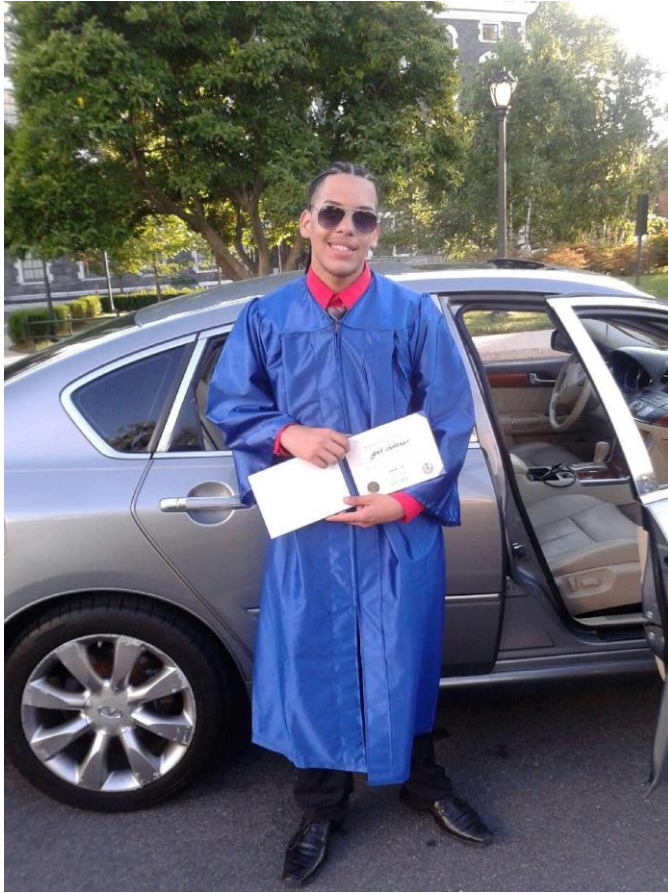
“I was so elated,” Murphy said. “A few years ago, I did not see this day coming.” She added that she doubted her daughter could have reached the commencement stage at Wildcat Academy without the support of a team of clinicians, behavioral coaches, and caseworkers from Astor Services for Children & Families.

When Cheyenne was eight years old, she was battling emotional issues that were causing her to be disruptive in her public school classroom. She was placed in one of Astor’s Day Treatment programs, which work with children ages 5 – 12 who display a range of behaviors that impact their ability to develop or attain age-appropriate cognitive and educational skills. Day Treatment gives children the chance to thrive in a traditional school environment while receiving the intensive support they need to overcome behavioral challenges so they can re-enter public school and transition into their appropriate school placement. In this program, Cheyenne received psychiatric treatment as well as academic schooling, and when she was ready to return to public school, a team of Astor caseworkers and counselors continued to keep tabs on her and provide her with ongoing services. Thanks to support from Robin Hood, Astor’s Transitions team (a group of caseworkers who work with kids like Cheyenne to help with the transition process, and who stay with them throughout their schooling), is currently tracking 153 of its former Day Treatment students as they make their way through school. This year, Cheyenne Murphy and five other young adults were the first clients since the program’s inception to earn high school diplomas.

Jurine Walker, Astor’s Deputy Director for Bronx Day Treatment and Transitions programs, said she was “overjoyed” when she heard Cheyenne would be graduating. “I’ve known Cheyenne and some of these other young adults since they were in the third grade,” Walker said. “It’s astounding to see the progress they’ve made. They have to possess a lot of strength to get to where they are today. We help them set their goals and are there to support them, but they are the ones who have to assume the responsibility to follow through.”



Cheyenne, who hopes to continue her education this fall in Boston, said she was grateful for the support she received from Astor's Transitions caseworkers. "When I was younger, the people in Astor's Day Treatment programs helped me get my emotions under control, and later, the staff in the Transitions program helped me set goals and focus on my schoolwork. Graduation day was a great day because I could see how proud my mom was, and that made me proud, too."



Joel Salazar holding up his diploma from the East Bronx Academy for the Future.

The same week Cheyenne and Eve Murphy were celebrating their milestone at Wildcat Academy, another former Astor client, Joel Salazar, received his diploma from the East Bronx Academy for the Future in a ceremony on the campus of Fordham University. Like Cheyenne Murphy, Joel credited Astor and his Transitions caseworker, Leemarie Sanchez, with helping complete his journey through high school.

"Whenever I got lazy, Leemarie got me back on track and worked with me on my goals," he said. Joel's mother, Jacqueline Rosario, thanked Astor for all the support its staff had provided for Joel over the past nine years. "Joel was hyperactive as a kid, but when he came to Astor in the fourth grade, they worked with him and I saw improvement quickly. And on the day he graduated, I thanked God for Astor; thanked God for Transitions. I'd recommend Astor to any parent."

About Astor

Since 1953, Astor Services for Children & Families (formerly The Astor Home for Children) has been providing behavioral and educational services in a caring environment where children and their families find strength, healing, hope and trust. Now serving more than 6,000 children and families annually in over 33 locations, Astor's current range of services in the Hudson Valley (Dutchess, Orange and Ulster counties) and the Bronx include: Day Treatment Programs (for children ages 2.9 – 14); Residential Programs (for children ages 5 - 14 who have severe behavioral and mental health challenges); Early Childhood Programs (in Dutchess County, Astor operates The Early Head Start and Head Start programs, which are federal early childhood programs for low-income families); and Community-Based Behavioral Health and Prevention Services (outpatient mental health services).

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