

When 18-year-old Sanaa looks back now, she can pinpoint the exact moment everything began to change. "August 11, 2024," she says. "That's the day I thank myself for taking a leap of faith and doing something for me."

That's the day she called Haven House.

The oldest of four children, Sanaa often felt more like a parent than a sibling. "I have three younger siblings," she explains. "Most of their lives, I was the one there. There's a big age gap, so I was always the first person they went to. We didn't really have consistent parental figures. My grandmother stepped in, and I saw her go through a lot, unexpectedly having to take us in. She was doing the best she could."



SANAA, AGE 18

By the age of 17, Sanaa said she felt "stuck." She was surviving on her own but barely, and she was lonely. She wasn't enrolled in school and had limited options for work or transportation.

"I remember talking to my sister one day, and she told me something that stuck with me: 'Don't let people mess up your life any more than they already have.' That hit me hard. It gave me the push I needed."

That push led Sanaa to pick up the phone and call Haven House. "It actually took me about a month after hearing about Haven House from one of my grandmother's friends to call," she says. "I wasn't doubting the program. It was just new to me. **But once I called, I realized it was exactly what I needed.**"

When Sanaa first connected with Morgan, a Youth Care Specialist in Haven House's Street Outreach program, she wasn't sure what to expect. "Morgan was the best introduction to the program I could've asked for," she says with a smile. "She's young, and that helped. She was so supportive and transparent. She gave me insight into real-world experiences and made me feel like I could actually open up. I didn't come from a place where adults cared that much about one kid."



MORGAN & SANAA

Morgan helped Sanaa get vital documents like her ID and Social Security card so she could get enrolled in GED classes at Wake Tech. "That was such a headache," she laughs. "But Morgan stuck with me through every step. She even drove me 40 minutes away to get my ID. When transportation was an issue, Morgan and other Haven House staff members took turns driving me to school so I could actually attend and begin earning my GED. That meant so much."

Now, after just over a year working with Haven House, Sanaa says her life is completely different. She has her own apartment thanks to Haven House's Transition in Place housing program, and she is focused on what's next. "I'm feeling good about actually taking a step and having something going on in my life while I'm still so young," she says proudly. "Having my own place at 18, having a support system. I'm really grateful to be in this program. I'm consistent and headstrong about what I want. I don't think there's anything that can really get in the way of me reaching it."

Her goal now is to graduate and eventually become a dental hygienist. "For a while, I didn't think I'd ever walk across a stage. But that's my goal now: to graduate, walk in a cap and gown, and finally feel like I can do anything."

Beyond that, she dreams of traveling the world. "I want to travel to Bali, Indonesia, and Fiji, places that almost feel like fantasy," she says, eyes bright. "I want to be the first in my family to do something like that. Most of the women in my family lived similar lives, and that's not bad, but I want to show girls my age that your past doesn't limit what you can do."

And the support she's received from Haven House, she says, made all the difference. "They helped me believe I could really do this. Haven House showed up for me in ways no one else had. I'm finally seeing what my future can look like."

