

## **DeKalb County Community Services 2006 Family of Distinction Nomination**

### **Charise Witherspoon, and her daughters Anita and Anitra**

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Charise is a single woman in her early 40's with twin daughters aged 11. She comes from a family of incredibly strong women who have always been there for each other when times were bad. She has worked steadily all of her life and has at one time been a successful business owner. She fell prey to addiction in the early 1990's. She is a survivor of Adenoid cancer and lived through two surgeries that left her with extensive nerve damage and completely deaf in one ear. She attributes her remarkable recovery to hard work and the love and support of her family.

Charise has been clean and sober since July of 2004. She spent time in treatment several times since the birth of her children but it was a difficult battle. She found the support she needed through the Haymarket program in Chicago, Women's Residence Service and finally Discovery House in DeKalb. The day before she entered the Discovery House program she fell and broke her leg while trying to teach her daughter's to skate board. This did not stand in the way of her plans. Within two weeks of her arrival her diligence paid off and she had started a job as a telemarketer. Her employment search was somewhat difficult due to having to travel by foot because she did not have a car. The resident manager at Discovery House referred her to the FCD program for budgeting and support. She saved enough money to purchase an affordable vehicle with her earned income. She successfully completed her stay at Discovery House and was chosen to serve as Resident Assistant her last few months there. While participating in the FCD program Charise obtained a full time job as a waitress at the local country club. She was recently completed a certification in Food Service Management and will be assuming a managerial position. She worked strenuously to improve her spending habits and has learned many new money management techniques. In addition to financial education, Charise participated in the Individual Savings Account program funded by CSBG. This enabled her to save enough money from her earned income to move to affordable housing from the Discovery House Transitional program. DCCS was able to match her savings to make her move possible.

Charise has always worked diligently to ensure her daughters' well-being and happiness. Charise's daughters are involved in several extra curricular activities such as scouting, gymnastics, basketball, day camps and educational trips. In her spare time, she is co-leading her daughter's Girl Scout troop. Charise hopes to succeed as a restaurant manager and is taking college courses to enhance her job skills. She and her daughters truly enjoy living in the DeKalb community and are a great source of inspiration to others who are seeking significant change in their lives.