

Jaky Dobbs has been blessed by
her children, Jack and Claire



Young MOTHERHOOD

**Katy moms reflect on becoming mothers at a young age
and how their journeys have strengthened them**

Written by Ashley Lancaster and Kirsten Cornell | Photography by Marisa Hugonnett



Whether you are a veteran parent or a novice, motherhood can be both wonderful and overwhelming. Adding in the pressures, concerns, and realities of being a young parent, such as finishing school, supporting yourself and a child, how your parents will react, and the uncertainty of the future make this life transition all the more challenging. And these are only a few of the hard-faced decisions that a new, young mother must face. The reality is, it is hard. There will be ups and downs. It may not be what you had dreamed. But as these mothers have proved, you can still accomplish the goals you had planned, only now with a greater purpose.



Nancy Sabino credits her children, Angel Xavier and Audrey, for pushing her and her husband to succeed



Olivia Bell rose to the challenge of raising her daughter Gracelyn and continuing her education

A Community of Support

Jaky Dobbs, now in her mid-20s and a married mother of two, remembers the support she had when she became pregnant, and her faith that carried her through. “When I was 19 and called home from college to tell my mom I was pregnant, she didn’t scold me,” Dobbs recalls. “She was supportive, loving, and never judgemental. She told me that no matter what, I would be having the baby.”

Her son Jack has been a blessing. “I was overwhelmed with the number of people that reached out to me to tell me they loved me, were there for me, and that they too had gotten pregnant before marriage. My son has changed my life - and for the better.” Dobbs found support through her church, the Fellowship at Cinco Ranch, as well. “The women in the ladies ministry even threw me a baby shower,” she says. “It was humbling that no one thought twice about supporting me.” Dobbs also credits Katy’s Pregnancy Help Center as a huge factor in giving her the courage to take on the role of motherhood.

Dobbs has a strong role model to look up to. “My mom’s support through that time in my life, and all of the continued ups and downs, has shown me what real love is and in fact, what a hero looks like,” Dobbs adds.

Motivation to Succeed

Nancy Sabino was 18 and pregnant with her first child, her daughter Audrey. At the age of 22, she had her second child, a son. “Even though times were tough, my husband and I worked hard to move forward with life,” says Sabino. At the time they had their first child, they were living with a roommate to save money. “By the time we had Angel Xavier, we had started our own business and were renting a home of our own.”

Although starting a family young carried with it its own unique set of struggles, Sabino believes that her children motivated them to push forward and strive for a better life. “We had only graduated high school and had to work hard to support our growing family she recalls,” she says. “You will definitely struggle, but there is help out there if you’ll reach out for it.”

Importance of Education

A senior in high school, Olivia Bell found herself expecting with no support from the baby’s father. “The father of my daughter was not prepared for the challenge of raising a child so for most of my pregnancy, I was alone,” she recalls. Bell graduated high school and began college courses.

Shortly after giving birth to her daughter, Gracelyn, Bell enrolled in college full-time taking classes five days a week while fully embracing her new role as a mom.

“Education is really important, and continuing school was a priority,” she explains. “I wanted to show other young mothers that it is possible to keep faith even when things are rough. There are better days ahead.” Bell is now in a committed relationship with someone who has become a role model and father figure to her daughter.

Life’s Challenges

Christine Abbey, 16, has a selfless and graceful view of her role as a young mother. A full-time student, she also works nights at a local store in order to spend time with her daughter during the day. “I graduated from high school and want to continue my education and earn a degree in teaching,” she says. “Before I was pregnant, I just lived day-to-day and never really gave much thought to the future. I realize now my future will directly impact my precious little girl.”

Although life has its challenges, Abbey is devoted to loving and raising her daughter Amanda, and her family could not be more proud. “I am truly blessed. Family and friends have been there for me and Amanda from day one,” says Abbey. “We have such a strong support system, and I thank the Lord for that each and every day.”

When asked what she would want other young women to learn from her story, Abbey says, “I do not regret my decision about having Amanda. But, if I could jump back in time, or if I could tell even one young girl, I would say to be true to yourself and even if you feel like you’re in love, you need to think about the consequences that will result from your decisions. Think about your future and how a situation like mine affects not only you, but everyone around you.”

Lending a Hand to YoungLives

YoungLives is a branch of the Young Life organization that ministers to pregnant teens or young mothers. It was created over 20 years ago, when Young Life leaders noticed that young women who were pregnant or had children would stop coming to meetings or sit alone in the back without participating, afraid of being singled out or judged. So, the mentors in this program decided to do something about it.

Mary Beth Cameron, a team leader for YoungLives and active in the organization for over 10 years, has seen the positive effects that the club has on the girls who attend. “YoungLives is wonderful because it allows us to care for these girls and their children in a tangible way. They get to go to a place where they fit in, have a free meal, and leave with necessities like baby formula, diapers, and clothes.”

Some of the girls YoungLives reaches out to are 17 years old or younger and with difficult or unstable living situations. When you have a child to raise on top of school and other daily pressures, the urge to abandon responsibility and just be a kid can be overwhelming. The volunteers felt that young women in this confusing situation needed a place where they could feel comfortable, and be around people going through the same thing, find encouragement, and bond with their children in a safe, faith-based environment. **KM**

ASHLEY LANCASTER is a freelance writer. She loves to travel with her husband and two boys.

If you are interested in volunteering or know a young woman in need of support, visit younglife.org or phckaty.org

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