



2011 G.E.A.R. Parent Network winning poster, "Hand In Hand" by an 11-year-old Maine artist.

## **No Matter What, Never Give Up**

*By Alexandra Dubon*

*Children's Mental Health Awareness Day - May 3, 2011*

*Hall of Flags, Augusta, ME*

My name is Alexandra Dubon and this is my mom Tammy, I'm sixteen years old and I have a two year old daughter Roselyn who is also here with us.

This is my story.

When I became a young teenager, problems developed between my biological mom who lives in MA, my stepfather and I. We fought constantly and I was abused verbally, mentally and physically. At the age of thirteen I met the daddy of my child and decided to let him know my home life situation. I became pregnant and we decided not to raise our child around this toxic, angry environment. We ran away from home to Maine.

When I went to receive prenatal care, I was placed with my mom, Tammy, and dad here in Maine. I was thirteen years old and eight months pregnant. I had not been to school since spring of sixth grade of the year 2008.

I always knew that I would parent my child no matter the sacrifice I had to make. Today I'm sixteen years old, the mother of a beautiful, healthy and bright two year

old daughter and a full time student in the sophomore class at Brunswick High School. I'm an honor roll student. I have a goal to graduate, get an associates business degree and attend cosmetology school. I want to own my own beauty business.

What keeps me moving forward in life are the people around me. The most important person is my daughter. I work really hard so her life will be better.

I have a great community of family. My wonderful parenting coaches have been with me since my child was six months old. They have helped me more than I ever imagined. They are a great support in my life. The other teen moms in my parenting group look up to me as a role model. I am able to share my skills with them and help them make their kids' lives better.

My second support who keeps me going on in life is my child's day care provider. She has been a wonderful person for my child and has put a lot of effort and love and care to be able to see me and my child move forward in life.

My third support is my twin brothers and my little sister who are currently living in Massachusetts. I want to be a good role model for them and teach them that no matter what comes along your way, you keep aiming towards your goals. Do not ever give up.

Finally, my mom and dad who I live with here in Maine help me a lot by believing in me and supporting me every step of the way to success. They make me feel like Roselyn and I matter and we are someone in this world. I have never met my biological dad, but my dad that I live with has never judged me and trusts that my decisions are best for me. He has shown me the love and support of a father. I will forever and always remember the time he said to me, "I want to see my granddaughter grow up." This statement holds me back from bad decisions and bad situations for my daughter. We, as teen parents, have to put our children first.

I will like to thank you all for your time and everyone who came to support me today and every day.