

St. Gerard Campus holds graduation

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Valedictorian Destiny Wells stood before her classmates at St. Gerard Campus on Friday night and reflected on how close she was to not being able to graduate, after finding out she was pregnant last August.

“The first thing I thought after I found out was how I was going to graduate,” Wells told the audience. “Through all the sleepless nights, the outrageous homework and the constant job that is motherhood, we have made it.”

St. Gerard’s, located on U.S. 1, is a fully-accredited high school that aids pregnant teenagers and unwed mothers. The school held its graduation ceremony Friday night at Destiny International Church, honoring 15 seniors who had a very different high school experience than their peers.

“This class was different from most years. They didn’t come with their babies in their arms,” St. Gerard founder Caroline Wolff said. “They came with babies in their bellies.”

Wolff said that a majority of the students’ terms ended in the final weeks of the semester, which led to several weeks of birthing down the stretch to graduation.

“They had to multitask to get where they are,” Wolff said.

The campus offers housing for teenage girls and their babies, providing daycare and travel to the doctor’s appointments. Without such care, many of the school’s students wouldn’t be able to attend classes and get their diplomas.

“It was easier because in regular high school, you only get 15 absences and you don’t get to graduate,” Wells said. “But with all of the doctor appointments and labor and such, it made it easier here. They were more lenient on stuff like that.”

The ceremony began with a slideshow, commemorating months spent together as a class. It showed a Halloween costume party, Thanksgiving dinner, Christmas fashion show and Easter egg hunt. After receiving their diplomas, the graduates sang their class song in front of the audience, swaying together as Wolff led them.

Each from different walks of life, they bonded while experiencing the many stages of life in a whirlwind year together.

“Our children are the reason why we are here,” salutatorian De’Shananya Humphrey said. “The women you see before you are the women who I shared some of my most critical moments with.”

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