

Rockville Centre Mom Finds Support Through Health Program

Nurse Donna Racines guided Shatima Greene through pregnancy complications, postpartum depression and early motherhood through the nurse-family partnership



As her son Phoenix approaches his second birthday, Rockville Centre's Shatima Greene, right, reflected on how nurse Donna Racines, left, became a trusted part of her 'village' during her journey into motherhood.

By Brian Kacharaba, Oct 16, 2026

When Shatima Greene welcomed her son, Phoenix, in November 2024, she was beginning a new chapter as a mother while navigating the challenges that came with it. Through pregnancy, childbirth and the first two years of raising her son, the Rockville Centre resident found steady guidance in Donna Racines, a nurse who became an important part of her support system.

Racines has spent five years with VNS Health's Nurse-Family Partnership, which pairs nurses with expectant mothers for home visits, typically beginning before 28 weeks of pregnancy and continuing until a child turns 2. Nurses provide guidance on pregnancy, infant care, feeding and child development, while building relationships that allow mothers to discuss challenges and receive support.

"I think the biggest thing that is important about the program is I hope that my job will help them create a strong attachment with their child," she said.

Racines, a former Brooklyn midwife, said she values helping mothers understand their health and develop strong attachments with their children.



Through play, laughter and everyday moments, Donna Racines, left, helped village resident Shatima Greene build confidence in motherhood while watching Phoenix grow and thrive.

Greene enrolled on July 31, 2024, when she was about 20 to 22 weeks pregnant. She learned about the program at a women's clinic and was interested in having a nurse with midwifery experience. As a first-time mother, she wanted professional guidance and a motherly presence, especially with her own mother living in North Carolina.

"I needed help, and my mom isn't here in New York anymore for the first time ever," Greene said. "I'm super close to her."

Greene had experience caring for children at her mother's home day care but wanted to learn about motherhood and involve her partner. She recalled feeling nervous about asking Racines to remove her shoes during their first visit because she is a germaphobe. Racines readily agreed.

The two also connected over family and cultural similarities, including that both their partners are Colombian. Greene said Racines was open about her experiences as a mother and wife, making it easier to talk about her own life.

Their relationship became particularly important when Greene experienced a pregnancy complication. Racines noticed that Greene's blood pressure, which had been stable, was unusually high during a visit. She urged Greene to go to labor and delivery and called ahead to alert the staff.

Greene said she was close to developing preeclampsia and was induced. Phoenix was born on Nov. 1, 2024. He was born late preterm, but was breathing well, maintaining his temperature and gaining weight. Greene spent four days in the hospital and went home two days after giving birth.

"I was happy that she did go there and get checked," Racines said.

After the birth, Racines helped Greene with breastfeeding and supported her through postpartum depression. Greene said being without her mother during that period was especially difficult. Racines sometimes stayed beyond scheduled visits, giving Greene more time to talk and vent.

"I was able to vent and say anything I needed to say to her with total, complete confidence and understanding from her," Greene said. "It was exactly what I needed."

Racines said she focused on positive reinforcement, reminding Greene that she was doing an amazing job while adjusting to caring for a newborn.

Now approaching his second birthday, Phoenix is "rambunctious," smart and "full of life," Greene said. He loves Elmo and "Bluey," remembers songs and show dialogue, and is talking more. Racines said Greene is attentive and responsive, talking with Phoenix and teaching him colors, words and sounds.

Racines also encouraged Greene to reconsider her career plans. After discussing nursing and business school, Greene remembered her childhood interest in animals and decided to pursue veterinary technician training at LIU Post, beginning in the winter semester.

As the visits approach their end at the end of the month, Greene said she dreads the transition and hopes they can stay in touch. Racines said saying goodbye can be difficult, but she is glad Greene is in a good place with her parenting and Phoenix is healthy.

"My village is usually my mom, and it still is, but while my mom isn't present, Donna was definitely my village that I could go to for anything," Greene said.

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