

## LONG ISLAND / SUFFOLK

# Teen who lost mom thanks her 'family' at Copiague prom



Mondy Close hangs out at the Copiague High School prom at The Milleridge Inn in Jericho on Thursday, May 25, 2017. Photo Credit: Marlo Jappen

**By Marlo Jappen**

Special to newsday.com

*Updated June 3, 2017 6:32 AM*

As Mondy Close greeted classmates and teachers at the Copiague High School senior prom on May 25, she sparkled in a pink jewel-encrusted gown.

For her, the evening was a reminder of how she has overcome challenges thanks to the support of her school community.

"Tonight means that I passed over difficulty and it's my time to relax," she said while taking a break from the party at the Milleridge Inn in Jericho.

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In February 2014, Close arrived in the United States with her older brother Renel Louis from Haiti with little knowledge of English.

Seven months later, Mondy lost her mother, Conseve Louis, who was hit by a car while she was walking to work.

"When you don't know anybody and when you don't have your mother with you, it's very hard," Close said. "You don't know who to talk

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to, especially in school, you don't know where to go."

Close found guidance from faculty members including her ESL teacher, Alisha Abreu, who helped prepare her for the Regents exams.

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“She talked to me just like my mom,” Close said with a laugh. “She says, ‘You have to pass this, You have to pass that.’”

She also befriended Xenia Reyes, a student originally from El Salvador, because they both speak Spanish. Reyes showed Close around the school and eased the transition.

“It’s wonderful to see her grow and to be supported by her peers and teachers,” said Copiague High School Principal Joseph Agosta. “She just emanates happiness and beauty and light.”

— Close, who lives with Renel, balances two jobs — one at Wendy’s, another at Stop N’ Shop — to help pay bills. She also plays clarinet and sings with her school’s choir.

After graduation, Close says she will study nursing at Suffolk Community College and then pursue an education in anesthesiology.

She hopes to use her knowledge to help people in Haiti who suffer from medical issues.

When Close reflected upon the people she has met at Copiague, she couldn't help but flash a warm smile.

— “They’re like a family,” she said.

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