

Jenifer's Story



On December 13, 2006 Jenifer thought she was beginning a new chapter in her life by following her boyfriend to Montana. That decision lead to homelessness.

Jenifer was born and raised in Arizona, one of three children whose Dad left before she was three leaving the family to live in poverty. Her difficult childhood included being sexually abused by her mother's boyfriends beginning at the age of four. At the age of fifteen she tried telling her mother about the sexual abuse but she did not believe her. When she finally accepted the fact her daughter was abused, she placed all the blame on Jenifer. Jenifer and her siblings were also physically abused by the men their mother allowed to live in their small trailer. At the age of 15, Jenifer and her younger sister found the courage to tell their teacher about the abuse. They were removed from the home immediately and placed in foster care.

Jenifer eventually married. Unfortunately she would discover she made poor choices in men. Her husband physically abused her and it was not until she entered into another relationship, this time with a married man, that she choose to leave. After making that decision she discovered she was pregnant with her husband's child. She gave birth to her daughter while in her new relationship. She believed her boyfriend when he told her he was no longer in a committed marriage. When he invited her to follow him to Montana she left her life in Arizona behind and on December 13, 2006 Jenifer and her infant daughter boarded a bus bound for Montana. A month later his wife arrived putting an end to what Jenifer thought was a new beginning. She had no place to go, homeless in Montana.

Too embarrassed to return to Arizona, Jenifer contacted her sister now living in Miamisburg, Ohio. Her sister's family situation made it impossible to take Jenifer and her daughter in so she gave her the phone number of the local Salvation Army.

With the help of the Salvation Army, Jenifer and her 9 ½ month old daughter boarded a Greyhound bus, this time bound for Dayton. It was a grueling two-day trip filled with mixed emotions, fear, and great concern for her sick baby. On February 4, 2007, after being greeted by her sister, she arrived at the St. Vincent dePaul Hotel and remained for one week before moving into the Salvation Army's Women's Shelter where she lived for 36 days.

The Director of the Salvation Army Women's Shelter introduced her to the St. Vincent de Paul Supportive Housing Program. On February 21st she had her first meeting and on

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March 16th she was accepted into the program. As she and her daughter prepared to spend their first night in their new apartment all she could say was “God, thank you!

Working the program in pursuit of her daily and weekly goals however was a challenge. She knew she had signed on to work the program but the expectations seemed to exceed her abilities. Jenifer’s low self-esteem and anger issues resulting from rejection, years of sexual and physical abuse put her in a deep state of depression. The depression got so bad she could barely care for her young daughter.

Kailene, her case manager, became very concerned. She knew Jenifer could not begin working on the things that would make a difference in her and her daughter’s life until she treated her depression. Calling on all resources available Kailene got Jenifer the medical help she needed. The right medication- taken consistently- along with therapy, made working the program more manageable. Jenifer has completed parenting classes, is studying for her GED in preparation to finding meaningful work. With the help of Section 8, Jenifer and her daughter will soon move into permanent housing close to her sister in Miamisburg.

Jenifer is very thankful to St. Vincent de Paul and the program that is helping her get a grip on life and learn skills that will contribute to her ability to take charge of her future. She said, “I came with nothing but thanks to the help I received I will leave with a better feeling and sense of self and a permanent place to live.”

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