



Rochelle's Story

Today, Rochelle is a full time student, proud of being on the Dean's list for four consecutive semesters, and holds a work study position at National College. Once you read her story you will know how far she has come and how much she has accomplished traveling along her life's journey.

Nine years ago Rochelle was overwhelmed with death. Within 14 months her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother died. Women she not only loved dearly but depended on for emotional support raising three children, ages 3, 9 and 10, while in an abusive marriage and battling depression. Their passing influenced her life-changing decision to end her abusive marriage. A decision that would result in a brutal attack from her husband who would stab her eight times. Rochelle recovered from the stab wounds and helped put her husband in prison for 6 years. Years later she would realize just how fortunate she was because he went on to kill another woman.

Depressed and feeling alone, Rochelle decided to leave Ohio in hope of a new start. She moved her young family to Philadelphia. For five years, despite her ongoing struggle with depression, things seemed to go pretty well. She had a full time office administrative position at Penn State and she shared her home with a new partner. Unfortunately she would learn her partner was abusing her two sons resulting in them being removed from the home. Devastated, but committed to getting her sons back, she did everything she needed to do to regain custody. Within months her youngest son was returned but it would take more than a year before she was reunited with her older son.

After 8 years in Philadelphia, Rochelle decided to follow her daughter who at the age of 16 had returned to Ohio to live with her aunt. She accepted her cousin's invitation to come to Cincinnati to live with her. This living arrangement would be short lived because her cousin put her and her sons out weeks later. With no where to go she sought the help of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. By this time her battle with depression was out of control preventing her from actively looking for work and participating in their 6 month program. With just one week's notice to leave IHN she reached out to a childhood girlfriend in Dayton. Her friend was unable to provide a place to live but helped her contact the St. Vincent de Paul Hotel homeless shelter. For the next 5 weeks she and her sons would spend their nights at the Hotel and their days at the Other Place. Her St. Vincent de Paul Hotel case worker, Cille, was instrumental in recommending her to St. Vincent de Paul's Supportive Housing Program and after participating in the 3-week interviewing process Rochelle was accepted into the program.

St. Vincent Supportive Housing

Rochelle's battles with depression coupled with the stress of dealing with a now rebellious 12-year old, continued to impact her ability to willingly participate in a structured program or find a job. She resisted the recommendations of her case worker. Rochelle knew she had marketable skills and had been gainfully employed, she did not understand how working a required 30 hours a week at a job site, without meaningful training or potential for future employment was a good use of her time. Because she knew she had to get a meaningful job to meet her financial obligations, she also resisted the suggestion and encouragement of her case worker to go back to school. She questioned the system's objective. Was it really going to help her to get a good job?

The first critical step in directing her effort however was to get control over her depression. Once her depression was under manageable control she was able to more clearly evaluate the recommendations and cooperate with the case management process. She made the decision to pursue education to enhance her marketable skills and potential for advancement. Rochelle choose to attend the National College in Kettering for several reasons. A critical factor was her ability to walk to school if she had to.

Once the decision was made to go back to school, Rochelle was committed to do her very best. She was pleasantly surprised at how well she responded to the educational environment and proud that her grades were far better than when she was in high school. Her efforts were rewarded with a job study position. Once again she began to question the system's objectives. The job study position compromised her benefits and it would take going to arbitration to prove the job study position was covered under Title IV Funding therefore qualifying her to continue receiving benefits.

Today Rochelle believes without a doubt "God is with her even through life's toughest struggles and when the time is right he will provide opportunity." Today she is confident that she will complete her college courses and earn a degree that will provide opportunities for a career in the health field. Rochelle also believes that her mom, grandmother and great-grandmother are always right beside her cheering her on. "I know I can make it."