

PROGRAM SUCCESS STORIES—INCOME

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Autumn is a 50-year old divorced mom of three who found herself in prison for nearly two years for violations stemming from repeated drug abuse. When she thought about her daughters and their futures, she knew that she needed to get her life back on track. As determined as she was, Autumn also knew that she could not do this by herself; she needed help from others. While in prison, Autumn reached out to various agencies and contacted a case worker in a Rappahannock United Way-funded financial assistance program. The program directed Autumn to Virginia Cares, a parole program designed to assist recently released parolees with re-entry into their communities. Eager to make a change, she immediately enrolled.

Upon release, Autumn successfully obtained two jobs and now works toward a set of goals, which include drug rehabilitation, enrolling in a financial and budgeting class, and regaining custody of her daughters. With these goals in mind and with two steady paychecks, she was prepared to begin the housing assistance program.

The program was able to assist Autumn in obtaining affordable housing by helping with a security deposit, first month's rent, and utility deposits. She soon regained custody of her daughters and with new confidence asserts that she will succeed this time around due to her determination and help from the financial assistance program.

Michaela, mother of two, was struggling financially, in 2010. Last year, the financial assistance program impacted her life. Since that time, Michaela has remained employed full-time with GEICO and has been offered the opportunity to purchase the home in which she and her family currently lives. She credits the positive changes in her life to the financial assistance program for helping her get back—and stay—on track.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN

Cynthia and her three young children, ages four months to four years, fled domestic violence in search of a healthier, happier, and more stable life. The family was impacted by two Rappahannock United Way (RUW)-funded programs: the

Haven, a domestic violence emergency shelter, and Hope House, transitional housing for women and children. They also benefited from one of RUW's community partners in Education, Head Start.

The family first went to the Haven, a local domestic violence emergency shelter. After receiving initial assistance there, they entered into transitional housing for women and children. Cynthia arrived homeless, undereducated, and unemployed. She was also without childcare and had significant dental concerns. Based on information from her case history, Cynthia had had an incredibly difficult childhood, peppered with parental substance abuse, poverty, and mental health issues that culminated in the violent death of a sibling and violence toward her oldest daughter. In spite of it all, she arrived determined to make life better for her family.

Upon entering Hope House, Cynthia had been linked to services such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medical Aid, and Food Stamps. The children were soon enrolled in the Hope House on-site child care center, and Cynthia submitted an application to Head Start for her oldest child who was eligible for the program. Her daughter was accepted into Head Start, and within weeks Cynthia gained employment. She began paying off old debt and saving money. Cynthia began attending classes in pursuit of her GED, studied to obtain her driver's license, and received dental assistance, giving her a beautiful smile. Her once non-existent self-esteem began to soar.

Cynthia recently graduated the Hope House program and found permanent housing in Stafford County where she works full-time. Each of her children is healthy and in an education program. She obtained her driver's license and received a donated vehicle to help her get to work, school, and to her children's schools. She is currently in the Hope House after-care program and continues to work toward completing her GED.

Cynthia needed help from all of the programs that assisted her. Your donation to Rappahannock United Way made it possible for Cynthia and her children to find shelter and safety during their crisis and then rebuild their lives. You made an impact by creating lasting change. Thank you for being an everyday hero. Thank you for Living United.

HOMELESS SERVICES

Matt grew up in California, had a bit of a troubled past, and was in an unsustainable relationship. Soon after his girlfriend gave birth to their son, a healthy child named Cameron, the relationship became volatile. Matt decided that he had to leave—both his girlfriend and California—but he did not want to leave his son. He began the process of getting sole-custody of his child, and won the case. He and Cameron

moved to Fredericksburg, but had little stability. Finally, Matt called the Homeless Services Program. He and his son stayed at a shelter for slightly over the allotted 90 days. With the downturn in the economy, Matt had some difficulty obtaining employment. He took advantage of the shelter's Job Readiness Program and finally found full-time employment. Matt and Cameron accessed the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) grant and soon moved into their own housing.

MMr. Davis is a middle-aged widower with two teenage daughters. He suffers from some serious health issues, and gradually over the past few years has become totally blind. Mr. Davis applied for disability, but, as with most first-time applications, he was turned down. While he had been providing for his family by working for a realtor as a receptionist, he could no longer perform this job with his disability. Finally, he received an eviction notice for failing to pay his rent.

Mr. Davis was put in touch with the Homeless Services Program and through the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) grant, brought his rent current. He also became involved with a Rappahannock United Way-funded program specializing in Legal Services for Families. Legal Services represented him during his appeals for disability benefits. HPRP continued to pay Mr. Davis's rent during the process. After a few months, Mr. Davis was eventually granted SSDI and is presently providing for his family on his own. Had HPRP not been available, he and his daughters would have been evicted and would have had nowhere to go. Instead, with the help of HPRP, they remained stable for the 11 months that it took to begin receiving disability services and are stable to this day.

TThank you seems so small for the true way I feel and for what I want to say. I am truly grateful to all at TBC for reaching out to help someone who truly could not help herself. My husband was my true north, the rock I anchored to and weathered the storms of my life. He and he alone helped me to hang on to what little bit of sanity I had in an eight year period of losing both my parents, three brothers, and my son. He was my best friend, and I held him as he died. Now I seem to be a boat with no anchor. This shelter has pulled me through the toughest storm of my life. Maybe you didn't realize it, but you are doing God's work. Once again, thank you from the bottom of my heart."

--Miss Sheila, Client, Thurman Brisben Center

EXTENDED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Rachel was born in Romania and adopted by a family in the United States at about age three. There was concern that Rachel was affected significantly by her early life in Romania and by language difficulties when she was very young. By the time Rachel had reached fifth grade, she was diagnosed with Mental Retardation and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Rachel was referred to the Extended Employment Services Program following her graduation from high school in 2007. Prior to this referral, Rachel had been given a vocational evaluation that indicated that Rachel demonstrated distractibility, inappropriate interpersonal interactions, a negative and uncooperative attitude, and a slow work pace. Evaluators felt that Rachel's true vocational potential could not be gauged due to her behaviors, and they asked that she participate in a community-based assessment/training program to improve these behaviors. Extended Employment Services filled this role and has proudly and successfully served Rachel ever since.

Upon Rachel's entry into the program, she presented an outgoing personality, physical and mental energy, and much enthusiasm. However, she had trouble using her energy to achieve positive results. Rachel expressed a strong desire to do well but had a great deal of trouble monitoring her own behavior. She lacked confidence in her abilities, often stating that she was afraid to perform or to fail assigned tasks.

After three years with Extended Employment Services, Rachel has transformed into a capable and confident young woman with endless potential. She has served as a valuable member of all work teams to which she has been assigned. Rachel has found a firm voice within and will now advocate for her wants and needs in a vocational setting. Staff can rely on her to produce both quality and quantity in her assigned tasks. She has learned the appropriate manner in which to socialize with staff and peers in a vocational environment, and now many of her peers look to her as a role model for guidance. Extended Employment Services is able to provide Ramona with the necessary supports to grow both personally and vocationally. Her future is bright and the sky is the limit.

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (EITC)

Tamara is a single mother who fell victim to the current economic downturn. After losing her job, followed by her home, she and her children were forced to move back in with her mother. While thumbing through the newspaper, she came across an advertisement for "Free Tax Preparation Services" through the Earned Income Tax Credit Initiative. She went to the site held at the downtown library, not really

knowing what to expect. Tamara was greeted by an extremely professional, skilled, and caring volunteer who helped walk her through every step of having her taxes prepared. Tamara was extremely nervous that she would end up owing at the end of the session, but to her surprise, she received a \$5,000 tax refund. Tamara saved this refund and just last month used it to put a down payment on a new home for her and her children. Without the help of Rappahannock United Way's Earned Income Tax Credit Program, Tamara might not know about or received the Earned Income Tax Credit and would not be one step closer to financial freedom.

Mrs. Delaney has worked hard her whole life, often holding down two or three jobs at a time. Until recently, she had never accessed her credit score; fearing the worst, she had always been too afraid of what it would show. Believing she had a low score and bad credit, Mrs. Delaney never tried to buy a house because she was convinced she would not be financially eligible for a mortgage.

While attending a free Credit Report Review Day event held by the Rappahannock Region Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition, Mrs. Delaney met with a volunteer credit counselor. During a one-on-one meeting, Mrs. Delaney received a copy of her credit report and score—for the first time.

When asked if the event was helpful, Mrs. Delaney answered, "Absolutely! I have never been brave enough to pull my report for fear I'd find something I didn't want to see or know how to fix. Having the opportunity to review my report with a knowledgeable person put me at ease." She added, "Turns out I had nothing to fear!" Mrs. Delaney was relieved to find out she had good credit and was excited to make plans to buy her first home.

EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY

Maryanne's daughter is terminally ill and bedridden—and a single mother of three. Since her daughter's illness, Maryanne has been the caregiver for her grandchildren, ages two years, four years, and 10 months. However, Maryanne herself is not in very good health and is in her mid-70s. The father of the children supports the family with a monthly check, but it is not enough to feed the family during their time of need. Somehow, the family still makes too much to qualify for Food Stamps/SNAP benefits.

Maryanne, her daughter, and her grandchildren have been able to depend on the Emergency Food Pantry for food two to three times a month. The program also helped her by providing diapers, baby formula, and toiletries. At Christmas, it provided food and a turkey. We also gave them toys that had been donated by

Fredericksburg Auto Auction. This family that fell into the gray area when it comes to receiving help from state or government programs was able to find help and hope in the Emergency Food Pantry.

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Carrie is an 18 year old young woman. During the winter stow storm in 2009, she called for emergency financial service because she did not have the \$130 to pay for her motel room for another week. Carrie had been living in a motel with her 6 week old baby, who had already been admitted to the hospital twice with a fever. There was snow on the ground, and the weather channel was calling for 6 more inches. Carrie had no family to turn to, no money, no diapers, no transportation, and no hope. There wasn't any availability at any of the shelters. There wasn't any family to help out, and the father was long gone. Again, she was 18 years old and had a sickly baby who could not afford to not have a warm place to stay.

The program staff worked quickly together and got her some diapers, formula, and food from the shelves. The owner of the motel was kind enough to let the program director come in after the weekend and the snow, to pay for the bill. This young woman and her baby were kept safe during this crisis and were safe and warm during the snow storm.

DISASTER RELIEF

On February 6, 2010, Mr. and Mrs. Thompson lost their mobile home to a fire. They were staying with relatives and called for Disaster Relief the next day.

The home was completely destroyed, and the family had had nothing but the clothes on their backs. They did not have insurance, and had also lost all of their medications in the fire. They were encouraged to speak with the Crisis Services Specialist.

Crisis Services was able to provide the Thompsons with money for food and clothing. She replaced their eyeglasses and Mrs. Thompson's dentures. Mr. Thompson said that they were able to have all of their medications replaced through their clinic. They were very appreciative of the help given by the Disaster Relief Program.