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**Basic Needs & Beyond | Stories of Hope**

**Safe and Sound**

‘Claudia’, a teenage girl had become pregnant and her family was about to be evicted. On top of being very low income and not having access to healthy food, she was experiencing dating violence issues. Thanks to counseling and basic needs support, she and her mother were able to secure a new apartment, apply for Medicaid for her pregnancy and get a restraining order for her abuser to stay away from her home. She has now had her child and her mother is able to work to support her daughter and grandchild. Today, thanks to Consejo Counseling, they are out of danger and have found stability.

**Moving into Stability**

‘Mike was recently divorced became homeless and he desperately wanted stable housing so he could enjoy regular visitation with his 10-year old daughter Unemployed and with no transportation except a bicycle, he was experiencing relational difficulties related to undiagnosed autism. Mike was in a very rough spot but fortunately with the help of Helping Hand House, he was placed into an emergency shelter program where he began the hard work of putting his life together, including medical care, basic family budgeting, job training and transportation assistance. Mike now sees his daughter regularly and continues to become more self-sustaining so he can live a more stable life that includes a better relationship with his family.

**Finding Hope**

As a single mom, Charity often felt overwhelmed taking care of her three kids. When she started getting phone calls from her daughter’s school about disruptive behavior, she felt torn between needing to be at work and wanting to pick up her daughter from school. This struggle was just one of Charity’s many challenges—raising three kids by herself had left her feeling uncertain about the future and was negatively affecting her relationship with her kids. She began working with Tamela at HopeSparks who helped her daughter get into a program that supports her social-emotional development in the classroom. Charity completed parenting programs and both she and her daughter got therapy to strengthen their relationship. After she created a Family Goal Plan with Tamela, Charity applied for a housing subsidy, they moved into a safe, comfortable home and she completed her high school education. In her free time, she volunteered at her daughter’s school and the principal noticed her dedication to so she offered Charity a position as a paraprofessional. Charity continues to pursue a career as a paralegal. “It’s not always easy, but I can make the best of it and be the best that I can for my kids. It’s not what you’re going through right now, its how you come out of it. We’re getting there one day at a time.”

**Multi-Generational Help Just in Time**

Homeless prevention is critical in keeping families together. Because families are encouraged to come to the Living Access Support Alliance (LASA) before they find themselves on the street, it was especially critical for the ‘Wilson family’ who represents three generations living in poverty. The family includes a mother and her daughter, who is a single mother of two, who met with a team member at LASA. She evaluated their needs and was able to pledge the funds necessary to assist with paying utility bills, providing transportation solutions and to help them with a plan to get out from under debt including obtaining employment. These preventive measures helped the family in a supportive and dignified way to keep their family together and in their home. “They provided Christmas gifts, hygiene products, household cleaning supplies, new jackets and words of encouragement.”

**Big Smiles**

The ‘Ramirez’ family of six had two children in need of immediate dental care however, they did not have insurance and the cost of treatment at other dentists was more than they could afford. Fortunately, the nurse at the children’s school knew about Lindquist Dental services that offers a sliding fee that turns no child away based on the family’s ability to pay. The family’s first appointment confirmed that there was emergent care needed for two of the children. After multiple treatments to address immediate needs and alleviate the pain the two children were having, they provided the other four children with preventive dental care. “It is wonderful to know that there is hope and a chance today and in the future, for families who are struggling and trying to make it through each day. From the bottom of my heart, my family and I thank you. All of the employee’s smiles make you feel loved.”

**B-I-N-G-O**

The Staff were so happy to see ‘Mrs. Thomas’ at the door of Adult Day Health. Her husband, Phil, had been attending Adult Day Health for almost two years. When Phil came to Adult Day Health, his marvelous sense of humor was obvious from the minute he stepped through the door. He always had a witty remark coupled with a mischievous smile that was infectious. Despite his diagnosis of dementia, which limited his cognitive abilities, he fit right in and enjoyed the opportunity to get out into the community and be involved in all of the activities – especially Bingo! During his second year in the program, Phil’s journey with dementia became much more server and he lost his ability to communicate and was easily frustrated and sometimes frightening. As Phil’s health deteriorated, he was hospitalized and later died. After he died, Mrs. Thomas donated Phil’s supplies, which include bingo prizes. His beloved prizes were evidence that he was engaged in meaningful activity that gave him a sense of purpose – despite his encompassing and progressive debilities. Regardless that others may deem this as an insignificant accomplishment, each prize represented a huge accomplishment for Phil and one, which brought him esteem and joy.

**Standing Strong**

‘CL’ had a long history with drug addiction and loss. When she came to New Phoebe House, she very much wanted to change her life and have her daughter return home. She jumped in to programming, recovery meetings, parenting coaching and all of the other services. Throughout her time there, she demonstrated great leadership skills; she became a House Mom and the President of the Resident Council. She saved money to purchase a car and to secure insurance. She is now preparing to move into permanent housing, which she has saved for diligently. She is working for the Recovery Café, has reunited with her daughter and is a role model to other clients. She has now been clean for 19 months and has met all the goals that she set and today, she has the solid footing to achieve whatever she sets out to do.

**Food is Life**

“It keeps us happy. It keeps us protected with food. It helps us live.” That’s 9-year-old ‘Angel’s’ description of Nourish Pierce County Food Bank in Puyallup/Graham. She and her mom ‘Nicole’ visit the food bank regularly, since Nicole suffered a series of setbacks, including severe depression and a seizure disorder that made it impossible for her to work. “We live on $1,300 per month, and $880 of that goes to rent. Without this food, life would be a real struggle. Now I never have to wake up and worry about not knowing what the family is going to eat.”

**Shining Star**

‘A.J.’ was 17-years old and desperately in need of housing. She had been ‘couch surfing’ and living on the streets for many months, since her mother was incarcerated and she had no natural support network to turn. Amazingly, she was still enrolled in school. The stress was taking its toll but thankfully, A.J. entered into a youth host housing program. Fast forward seven months later and A.J. graduated from high school and was accepted into five colleges, University of Texas, University of Puget Sound, Langston College, Eastern Washington, and UW Tacoma. A.J. is attending Eastern Washington, and plans to get her degree in theater and the arts.

**Living Strong**

Originally, from Gig Harbor, the Livingstons both worked hard at temporary labor but Mr. Livingston lost his job when he fell on his bike and hurt his ribs. They lived in motels after an eviction, but couldn't afford to continue living so unstably. At the Salvation Army Jarvie Lodge, both parents went to employment classes, got reinstated on public assistance and the boys were able to stay in the same school. Both parents got jobs at a nearby fast food restaurant where they could walk to work. In time, they bought a car, worked tirelessly and tried to save money but the car broke down a lot. Finally, a rapid rehousing program helped to ensure they had a place to live, access to food banks and furniture and other resources to settle into their new home. The boys have stayed in school, despite a long bus ride. Two shelters later and a lot of hard work on their part, they found stability and dignity for their family.

**From Fearful to Fearless**

‘Amy’ first came to the YWCA of Pierce County when she filed a protection order against her husband after he was physically abusive. They had been together for almost a decade and throughout their marriage, her husband had subjected her to physical and emotional abuse as well as financial control. While an attorney was able to represent Amy in her protection order case and her divorce, she was terrified of facing her husband in court. Thanks to the attorney, Amy was able to persevere and got a fair outcome, including military benefits, in her divorce. When her ex-husband refused to comply or pay the support, she was still very afraid to contact him to try to enforce the court’s order, so she didn’t do anything for a year. When she reconnect with the YWCA, she worked with a trusted advocate who filed the appropriate claims, helped her get footing and she gained tremendous confidence over time. By the end of their time working together, she realized that enforcing the orders and asking for what she was entitled to was about not only her financial wellbeing, but it gave her closure and the strength to move on with her life.