

True United Way Stories

Every United Way agency is encouraged to include a 'true client story' when submitting their application for funding request. Below are some of those stories.

There are three basic things that we all need for a good life: a quality education that leads to a stable job, income that can support a family through retirement, and good health. Yet sometimes, life does not always go the way we hope.

Many years ago, we learned the value of teamwork. We learned that, by working with others, we could do much more than we could do on our own. We know that times are hard so don't give until it hurts, please just give until others don't hurt.

Cassie's Story

With tears in her eyes, a middle-aged lady named Cassie said 'I won't be on your register book. I have never been here before.' She went on to say how embarrassed she was to be asking for food – but she and her husband were desperate. Her husband's work has been sporadic due to the weather and she had recently had back surgery. They had already been turned down for food stamps and were barely able to pay their bills. We assured her the Food Pantry was here to help her and she had no reason to be embarrassed. She left her our office with a generous supply off food and compassion. Since that time, Cassie has returned many times, not for food, but to volunteer her time to help us help others. It is because of United Way and you that we were able to help Cassie and continue to help so many others like her.

A Mom's Story

Our agency has the opportunity to work with many people that struggle with basic living needs every day. What some of us take for granted, is a struggle for many who walk through our doors. Recently, a young mother (who has four young children) walked to our office with two of her children and asked for help with her utilities and food.

Sadly, this is a normal request, but this mother had an urgency we don't normally see. She couldn't carry much with her because she had walked here; however, we told her we would be by later to deliver her some additional food. That afternoon when we pulled up to her home, she was outside with her four children. They had been eagerly waiting to see what we would bring them to eat. We could barely get the car doors opened before the young children gathered around the car trying to see what we had brought. We actually watched as they tore open a box of frozen sausage and biscuit sandwiches and began trying to eat them. Let me say that again – they were still frozen, yet they didn't care!

This is just one of many situations we witness on a regular basis. We see people with huge needs and of course we never seem to be able to meet all of them. With continued support from United Way we can carry on our mission of helping families in need.

Little Joey's Story

Little Joey and his mother recently came to live at the Owensboro Area Spouse Abuse Center (OASIS). Many times when victims of domestic violence arrive they have only the cloths they are wearing or what was able to be quickly gathered up before they fled. One of the things Joey brought with him was his lunch box that resembled a coal miner's lunch bucket.

Upon all arrivals at OASIS, an assessment is done to evaluate their needs. During the assessment, Joey opened his lunch box to show what he had brought with him. Inside his lunch box was his pet caterpillar. As you can imagine, intake workers see many things that are of great importance to both adults and children but little Joey's pet caterpillar was a first.

All facilities like OASIS have rules that must be followed and allowing pets is something that unfortunately is now allowed. With over 80 people in this shelter at one time, you can quickly see why certain rules are put in place.

As the staff began to discuss amongst themselves how to handle this most unusual situation, one staff member stepped forward and asked that she be allowed to talk with Joey. She asked Joey if she could look at his pet caterpillar and they began to talk about what his pet liked. After a period of time the staff worker asked little Joey if he thought his caterpillar would be happy in their enclosed garden. Joey happily and readily agreed that yes he thought he would.

Now Joey, his mom, and his pet caterpillar are safe... all because of people like you.

Ms. Mattie's Story

Ms. Mattie was not doing well and wanted to spend her final days in her own home surrounded by her loving family. Her medical condition required a large amount of durable medical equipment that was far above the usual reimbursement from Medicare for Hospice care. The funding received from United Way helped to offset the significant negative financial impact that would have been felt.

Jenny's Story

Last year, Jenny made it through the early part of the school year wearing flip-flops, but as the weather began to change – her shoes did not. The Family Resource and Youth Services Center quietly contacted Jenny's family. They had never asked for help before, but this time, they welcomed the new winter shoes that were provided.

Brian's Story

Brian a divorced father is raising his 3 girls all by himself. Just keeping up with necessities takes almost his whole paycheck, yet the girls do not complain. Every Monday night they get a hot meal at the Salvation Army and that helps a lot!

Jill's Story

After being assaulted, Jill knew she needed medical treatment. Upon her hospital arrival, the New Beginnings agency was immediately notified. This program provides sexual assault victims emotional support, new clothing and toiletries so they can leave the hospital in dignity. On-going follow-up therapy continues for Jill and she is making good progress.

Disabled Gentleman's Story

In need of many home repairs, an elderly disabled gentleman and his wife were blessed with help from the Hancock County Repair Affair. Some new wiring was installed; roof repairs were made along with a stainless steel chimney liner and two new windows. Then, fresh paint was applied to help restore the beauty of the old home.

Joe's Story

When Joe, a 15 year-old boy, moved to our community, he had an extensive history filled with escalating behaviors including truancy, angry outbursts, physical and verbal aggressions, property destruction, self-harming, lying, and defiance of authority. He had disrupted four foster care placements and had been sent to a juvenile detention center four times. Joe continued exhibiting these negative behaviors as he now had to live in yet another new environment surrounded by new peers, new caregivers, new rules and new expectations.

Joe frequently challenged his new caregivers with their commitment and love for him by self-harming with random sharp objects, verbal and physical aggressions requiring staff to physically restrain him from harming himself or others, chronic episodes of property destruction while verbally expressing lack of remorse for behaviors or concern for consequences, and seeking out opportunities to purposefully upset or offend others attempting to make them feel the depth of his emotions. He often expressed, "This is who I am. I hurt people." It took months of therapeutic treatment for Joe to work through his thoughts and feelings which were fueling these self-destructive behaviors. It became evident that Joe was trying to avoid creating lasting bonds with others and to avoid potential loss in the future. He finally expressed, "If I'm bad enough, I won't ever lose anybody again."

Gradually Joe began working in therapy and his angry outbursts began to diminish and his self-harming behaviors ceased. He started having home visits with his family and was able to share his trauma narrative with them which afforded the

entire family the opportunity to participate in the healing process. Through the support of Kentucky's donors, including the United Way, this collaborative outreach provided Joe with the mental health treatment needed to transition back into his family's home. Recently, Joe communicated to the staff by way of the following letter:

Dear Service Provider,

I want to let you know that I am doing good and have just past my 10th grade year, so I am doing great right now. I'd like to say thank you for everything you have done for me while I was there. I'm sorry for all the things I put everyone through. I notice that I would not be sitting here writing this to you if you had not taken me in and kept me all that time. I'm glad to be back with my family now. Yes, we have had some arguments but everything seems to be getting better. Again I want to thank you for everything you've done for me. I'd like to wish you luck with the rest of the ones there now. I wish I could have been a better role model for them but I had made poor choices, but I do believe everyone does that every now and then. The one thing I would like for you to know is that I have been put in a lot of placements, but I have never been put in one where people really liked me and were happy about working with me. You have helped me out big time by making me more of a better person.

Thank you! Joe