



HAPPY EASTER!

Dear friend,

Everyone we meet these days seems to be more than ready for spring after enduring another long, dreary winter. For the next few months we may enjoy the outdoors without worries of frostbite, ice or sub-zero wind-chill temperatures!

As we rejoice in the rebirth this new season brings, we want to take a moment to thank you for your generous support of Ruth Meiers Hospitality House. We are so grateful for your commitment to helping the homeless and hungry families we serve. By working together, every day we are making a difference in the lives of the men, women and children who need our help - so they may share in our optimism for the future and enjoy the beauty spring brings to our community.

Please share in Ruby's experience with homelessness. We hope you will be as honored to be a part of this grandmother's new-found independence as we are.

"Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness..."

As told to Kelly Gunsch, Director of Development

As I walked up the steps of our women's shelter, I was greeted at the door with an ecstatic, vibrant smile. Ruby quickly introduced herself to me; she has been a guest at the Ruth Meier's Women and Children's Emergency Shelter since February 8th. Today, she was beaming with pride because she had just received the keys to her own apartment!

I met with Ruby to learn how she, a mother of four and a grandmother of 13 young boys and girls, found herself without a home and in need of a helping hand. Clearly, this was not how she imagined her story...yet, her smile shares a profound gratefulness that is impossible to describe.

A young grandmother at age 58, Ruby came to Ruth Meiers Hospitality House to escape violence - a situation brought upon her, her daughter and her daughter's two young sons - by the boys' father.

Ruby explained to me that her daughter, Jennifer, had been punched, shoved and verbally assaulted in front of the children. She had suffered a broken wrist and many bloodied noses at his hands and her self esteem was virtually non-existent. Jennifer's two sons, only eight and nine years old, began having anger control problems of their own and often lashed out at their mother in the same manner their dad routinely did.

Ruby shared with me that this was all-too familiar feeling since she too had endured such abuse at the hands of Jennifer's father. Even though she had left her abuser years ago, I could see the scars were still very painful as she told me why she had chose to leave and start a new life for her and her children.

Ruby moved here from Colorado to help Jennifer care for the two rambunctious boys. Although Jennifer worked long hours to pay the bills, their money was tight and they could not afford childcare. Both boys had been diagnosed with ADHD and the youngest was recently found to have a mild form of autism. Ruby did her best to care for her grandsons, helping them with their homework and working to help Jennifer as best she could. To watch her daughter endure the outbursts was heart-breaking and after several months Ruby simply could not stand by and do nothing. She spoke up, but every time she intervened things only got worse.

One day, in an effort to punish Ruby, Jennifer's boyfriend kicked her out of their home.

Surprisingly, as she told me of how that violent outburst had left her homeless with nowhere else to turn, she laughed. With a mischievous smile she explained, "He did this to hurt me, to make me suffer. But it did just the opposite! Making me leave was the best thing he could have done for me."

With nowhere to live, Ruby called Ruth Meiers Hospitality House. The only open room our shelter had was the "mommy and me" bedroom with a twin sized bed and a crib.

"It is a very tiny bedroom, but I am so happy to be here. In place of the crib, I have a card table set up to put puzzles together and I play games on my computer up there."

As part of the emergency shelter program, Ruby also received assistance from Ruth Meiers staff with goal setting and her housing search. She met weekly with our in-house social worker and received referrals to other helping agencies such as Transit. "Just having a warm bed to sleep in and knowing I wouldn't go hungry would have been more than enough," Ruby tells me. "I wouldn't want to leave if I could have my "babies" with me."



Ruby's "babies" are her two Chihuahua dogs, Sassy and Spike. She has had them both since they were pups and says that caring for them helps her with her depression. She told me that not having them with her is the most difficult part of being homeless. Ruby is now counting down the days until she receives a letter from her physician affirming her pets are therapeutic - which is all her new landlord needed to allow her to have both of her dogs allowed in her new apartment.

"I will have to save what's left of my disability check the next couple of months to buy a futon, which will save space since I won't need a bed." "I just picked up my key today and also had my electricity turned on! Three more days until I can move into my "munchkin" sized apartment where I can actually reach the top cupboards in the kitchen!" Such simple things to most of us, yet at this point in Ruby's life they mean the world to her.

Ruby has been an outstanding role model for other women staying at the women and children's shelter. She always does her share of the household chores and loves to help out the shelter staff as well as the other families living there.

As our conversation came to a close, Ruby said "Before I came here to Ruth Meiers, my goal was to simply make it through the day. Now, I am setting real goals and moving into my apartment on Monday! If all you had done was given me a place to live, I would be happy and eternally grateful. But you all have done so much more. My whole attitude has changed; I'm positive again and confident in my future. Thank you all, so much, for giving me back my hope!"

At the time of this visit, Jennifer and her sons have also escaped their situation and are living in the Ruth Meiers Shelter. Unfortunately, homeless, though often hidden, exists in our community. When Ruby leaves Ruth Meiers Hospitality House, another woman will take her place, and another family after that.

There are too many people right now who need the support of Ruth Meiers Hospitality House. The individuals we serve want to break the cycle of homelessness and become self-sufficient. With your gift, we can continue to shelter and provide a path to success for those men, women and children.

Will you please consider a generous gift that will help us to change lives and create brighter futures for your neighbors such as Ruby?

With thankfulness for your generosity,

Susan Martin

Susan Martin, Executive Director



Please accept my (our) partnership in the lives of the people you serve, giving them food, shelter and hope for a brighter future. Every heart deserves a home.

\$3,000 _____, \$2,500 _____, \$2,000 _____, \$1,500 _____, 1,250 _____,
 \$1,000 _____, \$750 _____, \$500 _____, \$400 _____, \$300 _____,
 \$200 _____, \$100 _____, Other _____

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