

Every Day Miracles Only a Paycheck Away

It can happen to anyone.
And it can happen so quickly.

I have heard it said that 7 out of 10 Americans are just one paycheck away from being homeless. So many of us live paycheck to paycheck, some because we choose to spend our money instead of saving it and others because our circumstances don't give us any other choice.

We pay our bills as soon as our paychecks are deposited, holding our breath that there is enough money there to cover them all. But then the unexpected happens. A car breaks down, we get a layoff notice, someone in the family gets sick. All it takes is just one thing to go wrong and then the whole house of cards comes tumbling down. It is happening way too often now.

Mom called Blessing House because an organization that she had called for help told her about us. She was homeless and had already tried every option and referral that we suggested. The shelters either didn't have space or they didn't fit her needs. Mom had used what little funds she had to stay in a hotel a couple of nights but she now had no place to go. She wanted to know if her boys could stay with us.

As has been the case more than we would like recently, we told her we didn't have space for them that night. But we knew that the children could not stay with her in the situation Mom described to us, so we met her at a local hotel and made arrangements for them to stay for a couple of nights. It was almost midnight by the time all of the arrangements had been made and the boys looked exhausted, but they were grateful that they would have a clean bed to sleep in that night. They dug through the pile of belongings they carried with them in the back of their car and found what they needed for the night, then they climbed the stairs to collapse in their room.

A couple of days later when there was finally space for the boys to come to Blessing House, Mom arrived looking much more rested. She was so thankful for our help and said she really appreciated us helping them when no one else could. Then she told her story.

Mom had been living in a place with her two boys while she went to school. She had been employed, but then lost her job. Her school schedule made it difficult to find another job. She got a couple of weeks behind on her rent and then she found herself with an eviction notice. Soon she was placing her belongings in storage and packing up her car with the bare necessities until she could figure out what to do.

Mom was advised by several people who were trying to help her to drop out of school until she could get a job and a place to live. But Mom knew if she did this, it would set her back a whole year in school. She only had a year to go to get her degree and she wasn't willing to give up the idea of graduating in May without putting up a fight. So she kept making phone calls until she finally arrived at our door.

Mom arrived to fill out the paperwork while the boys were at an after school activity. She told us her story and got a tour of the house, feeling much more comfortable after she saw where her boys would be staying and met a few of the people who would be taking care of them.

Later in the day, she returned with K. and M., both tired and hungry after a long day. As the boys said goodbye and headed to the kitchen to get a late dinner, Mom had one last conversation with Sr. Mary who asked her where she would be staying that night.

Mom said she wasn't sure. She told Sr. Mary what her options were and it was obvious none of them would really be safe. Sr. Mary assured her the boys would be fine then said goodnight to Mom as she left. It was a heart wrenching separation.

Sr. Mary admired the courage and determination of this mom. She did not want to give up her pursuit of her education and her opportunity to make a better life for her children and herself. And even though her children were still in grade school, she was already talking about their options for going to college.

Every day was a struggle for Mom just to get through the day. But today she held onto the rope that had been thrown to her and told herself that tomorrow would be better and she would be one day closer to the goal she set for herself.

Mom had never expected she would need to worry about where she would sleep that night. Mom never thought she would have to worry about keeping her boys safe.

Homelessness can happen to anyone.
It can be only a paycheck away.