

INCOME:

A United Way Success Story

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United Way
Metro Chicago



THE CHICAGO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS RECENTLY ESTIMATED THAT ROUGHLY 21,078 PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS ON A TYPICAL NIGHT IN THE CITY, MORE THAN PERHAPS EVER BEFORE. HOUSING COSTS ARE SKYROCKETING IN OUR REGION WHILE AVERAGE PAY IS BARELY KEEPING UP WITH INFLATION, LEAVING THOUSANDS OF WORKING PEOPLE DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO FINANCIAL CRISIS OR EVEN HOMELESSNESS.

Meet Sue.

Sue was a hard-working single mother with two young children. She worked full-time as a bus driver, but her wages simply couldn't cover the rent, daycare and other family expenses. No matter how hard she tried to budget her limited income, she fell further and further behind until, eventually, she could no longer afford to keep a roof over her family's heads. They were homeless.

"My kids asked me constantly, 'Mom, why can't we just get an apartment?' It was extremely frustrating knowing there was nothing I could do," she said. "I'd sift through apartment ads and think, if I limit my grocery shopping, it might work."

Just when she was beginning to think there was no hope, Sue found the United Way-funded transitional housing program at Bridge Communities. At the program, she and her children received temporary shelter, financial counseling, help finding an affordable place to live and the emotional support she needed to move forward.

Today, Sue is a semester away from completing her bachelor's degree in social services and works for the DuPage County Department of Public Health, in a position that provides a greater wage to provide for her family. She and her children live in a cozy apartment in a neat and quiet subdivision in Westmont.

"I remember it was Christmas time when we got the keys to our apartment. We were all so excited," she said. "We were finally able to breathe after a long time of holding our breaths."

Even more exciting, Sue and her family are about to purchase their very own condominium through the United Way funded home ownership program at Bridge Communities.

"I finally feel I am providing for my children. I am debt-free, and a homeowner—something I never imagined I'd be. I have hope again for a bright and successful future with my kids," she said.