



Heart of Florida United Way and Coalition for the Homeless - Restoring Dreams and Self-sufficiency

As a young woman, Mary* had big dreams for her life – many of which came true. A talented graphic artist, she had her own design studio, a family and deep ties to the Texas community where she lived.

But when her business and marriage fell apart, a chain of events led her to Orlando where she, her son and new husband hoped to make a fresh start. What awaited them, however, was even more hardship.

When her husband unexpectedly died, Mary had no time to grieve. Finding employment in a local factory, she hardly had time to save any money before she, too, was dealing with a serious illness.

Penniless and alone, Mary and her son sought shelter from the Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida, Inc., a United Way supported agency. In time, the pair moved into transitional housing, which gave them more independence while case workers continued helping them work to achieve self-sufficiency.

During her stay at the Coalition, Mary participated in training programs that enabled her to find full-time employment, reduce debt and save money. In her spare time, she also trained to earn a higher paying position as a 3-D digital animator.

Within 18 months, Mary saved enough money to move herself and her son into a small home in Clermont where her life is finally coming back together. Deeply grateful for the help she received from the Coalition for Homeless, she's now beginning to imagine new dreams for the next chapter of her life.

* To protect the client's identity, a different name has been used.

By supporting Heart of Florida United Way, you help fund nearly 100 local agencies such as Coalition for the Homeless, whose programs are making a critical difference in people's lives. You also become part of United Way's work to prevent critical problems by focusing on four key areas: Building Safe Communities; Improving Financial Stability; Developing Healthy Children and Families; and Alleviating Hunger and Homelessness.