

Stories of Hope



House of Hope

Empowering Women. Building Futures. Enriching Communities.



Kayla

“My name is Kayla. I have a little named Charlotte. She is about to turn 5 in February.

There's no easy way to summarize the beginning of our journey. The journey leading to House of Hope actually started long before Charlotte. We're both believers....but I think many know that God never fails to keep you on your toes. And life has not failed to be a beautiful kind of crazy.

No one is perfect. Growing up, I wasn't always in the healthiest of environments. But I definitely wasn't in the worst either. And I can acknowledge that period- that not great parts took their toll. To speed up, I believe I was 16 when I moved out of my home. It's not something that ever suggest, but it's a choice I still stand by for myself for that time.

At that time, I had been in a very long term toxic relationship with my boyfriend who would later become Charlotte's dad. I also had a very toxic relationship with my mom who was my only present parent, and I wasn't very connected with the rest of my family. My high school experience was extremely negative on top of regular teenage stuff. There's always more to the story, but those things kind of laid out the platform of where my life would be going over the next few years. Survival mode/trauma mindset became my way of thinking. I think everyone can attest to knowing decisions aren't always made well when from that place.

I found I was expecting about 2 weeks after ending my relationship. There was a lot of habits that I had become aware of and had been working on as I entered motherhood. The game changer was when I applied and was accepted at House of Hope.

I've done the hard work to get to where I am at now. But I would not have had the space to do it without House of Hope. Now, I went from instability to stability. I paid off a ton of debt and have gotten my finances in order. And the times that I slipped back into old habits during my time there, I had that space to bounce back and get things right again. I've been able to heal some traumas. I've also been able to have some support as I face new and big obstacles that have come into play. I was able to qualify for the Habitat for Humanity program and will now purchase and own a home. My daughter has been able to make new friends while I've been able to restore some of those old broken relationships in our family. Although it may be bumpy, her father and I have successfully been able to reach a place of co-parenting. I've been able to get back into school and pursue my dreams so I can pour out into my community through my career as well. Charlotte was a little over 2 when we moved in, and from the beginning she gets to now have connections that have been in our corner and for the rest of our lives. We need more places like House of Hope. They break cycles and statistics. I'm a woman of color who came from a single parent home and got pregnant young. I'm still a hot mess express:) You can fully expect my little and I to be doing big things in the world. From your favorite unapologetically strong ladies, Kayla and Charlotte.”



Sullyntha

Sulynthia came to the United States from The Marshall Islands when she was about 11 years old because her mom wanted her to have a good education in America. She moved around a lot and eventually landed in Waterloo, Iowa with her uncle and his family. Sulynthia did the cooking and cleaning and tried to follow the rules- respect elders, don't speak up or talk back, do what you're told. It became too much. "Well, to be honest, I didn't want to do it anymore...all the conflict. I needed to be on my own." That is when Sulynthia found House of Hope.

"It is really hard, not having anyone. I like the environment with you guys here- it's like we're a family."

While Sulynthia has been in the House of Hope program, she has worked on her finances and credit, got a car, a job, reliable childcare and very importantly, worked on her mental health. "I've never had confidence telling my feelings so the Wellness Program has really helped." When Sulynthia gave birth to her second child, she was grateful for House of Hope support. "Brooke came to the hospital to make sure I had someone there with me. I feel blessed to be able to have people to call." Sulynthia has had many obstacles thrown at her while in the House of Hope program and still she keeps going, crushing her barriers. She hopes to get into the Habitat for Humanity program and become a homeowner and continues to work on being "mentally, physically, and spiritually healthy." Her advice to other struggling single mothers? "No matter how you're struggling, keep a positive mindset and always be grateful. Your struggles are just a moment, not forever."



Mayra

How many kids do you have?

Two, ages 4 and 1

What led you to HoH?

I was pregnant and didn't have a stable home for my kids. My goals were to get a stable job and support both my kids.

What are some things that have helped you here?

Everything... they taught me how to budget and manage my money.

Boost- I learned a lot while I was in Boost- I learned a lot of things about getting a job that I didn't think were important before.

What is your favorite thing about HoH?

You guys are all awesome! You all help us in different ways... it's like you're our family, like when we leave here we are moving out of our parent's house to live on our own and we almost don't want to leave! Even though I moved out, I'm still going to be involved because I have a lot more things I want to learn and do.

Why do you think HoH is important?

Because it helps single moms... they build you up and make you realize you can do things you never thought you could do before.



Yessica

A Dominican Republic native, Yessica had a seemingly impossible road ahead of her. She and her children escaped their dangerous domestic violence situation and fled to a shelter, only to have her abuser, the father of her children steal her oldest two from the shelter while she was out. She had not been allowed to update her Visa over the years, therefore she was living in the U.S. illegally. After finally finding a room to rent, she lost everything she owned in a house fire, including her identification and expired passport. She had never driven a vehicle, struggled with the English language, and had very little education when she found herself at House of Hope.

Her first 8 months at House of Hope with her 2 -year-old daughter seemed to be met with barrier after barrier. To comply with our program requirements, she had to either work or go to school. Without a current work permit, getting a job was not an option and with limited English, school was almost impossible. Most people would have thrown their hands up by now, but not Yessica. She managed to enroll in ESL classes and classes through Iowa Workforce to meet our program requirements.

Just when things started looking up for Yessica, the father of her children sued her for sole custody. She had no money, could not work, and could not get legal aid. After being rejected by 13 lawyers, we finally found someone to take the case on a payment plan.

Eventually Yessica's work permit came through and she immediately got a job at Tyson. In the next several months, she took advantage of the House of Hope Financial Mentoring program, caught up on 12 months of back program fees, learned to drive and got her license, got a car through the Gearheads program, bought car insurance, graduated from the House of Hope program, and WON her custody battle! For the first time in her life, she was completely self-sufficient and fully realized her self-worth.



Then Covid-19 hit.

Although Yessica filed for her work permit renewal 100 days in advance, the Pandemic made processing time longer than usual. And although the U.S. Immigration Department issued a 180-day extension, Tyson terminated her anyway and contested her unemployment claim. In the midst of a global pandemic and with 3 mouths to feed, Yessica found herself once again without income- and positive for Covid-19.

When most would have given up, Yessica persevered. It took her over three weeks to recover from Covid-19, and she wasted no time seeking employment. Friendship Village, a long-time partner of House of Hope, happily employed Yessica. What started as a temporary position, became permanent and for the first time, Yessica worked for an employer who respected and valued her. She continued taking advantage of House of Hope programs and guidance and has become a regular volunteer. When she finally received her long-held tax refund, she used it to pay the remaining \$12,000 in lawyer fees incurred from fighting for custody of her children.

Today, Yessica is debt-free, has reliable transportation, works two jobs, and provides a safe and stable home for her children. Yessica's three children had a front row seat last summer, as Mayor Hart presented their mom with the Iowa Women's Foundation Ovation award for perseverance.



Paris

Paris reached out to House of Hope after painfully and bravely realizing she did not want to raise her two small children in a toxic environment due to an unhealthy relationship.

From the very beginning Paris inspired awe with her tenacious motivation. After learning a job opportunity at Target Distribution would become available in three weeks, she approached House of Hope staff in exactly three weeks ready to apply. Paris took advantage of every program and resource offered through House of Hope. She immersed herself in the Family Support and Wellness program, learning invaluable coping skills and positive parenting strategies. She repeated the financial mentoring program multiple times, creating a spending plan, paying down debts, and ultimately raising her credit score 180-200 points enabling her to finance a car. She applied for a grant from a PEO group and was approved, paying off medical debt incurred from giving birth to her children.

But Paris wanted to be more than just self-sufficient. She wanted to own a home.

Paris worked tirelessly to become eligible for Habitat for Humanity through the Framing Hope program and was soon accepted. She worked diligently with the House of Hope case management team to complete all paperwork and attended all home buyer and finance classes. She wasted no time completing her required 300 hours of sweat equity, all while working full time at Target Distribution and raising two children on her own.

February 9, 2021 Paris will become the first woman in 25 years to leave House of Hope as a homeowner.



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Years of Service

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For more than 25 years, House of Hope has helped hundreds of women and families out of homelessness. Women in our program receive professional, individualized case management and a safe place to live while they pursue education opportunities, find employment, pay debts and fines, learn coping and parenting skills, and much more. In 2020, 93% of women successfully completed the House of Hope program with gainful employment and stable housing! In addition to housing 15 single-mother families, House of Hope provides transitional housing and support services to 5 women who age out of foster care in our prevention program, Pillars. House of Hope also offers services to women on the wait list (generally about 100 families long!) in our Outreach program. Our Family Support and Wellness Program strives to teach, practice, and support growth in health and overall wellness. House of Hope has a rich history of community support for 25 years, vital to the success of the program. For more information about House of Hope, visit our website at www.houseofhopeccd.org.



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