

180 WAY

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LIFE WAY

Life Way is the path that has brought a family to our doors. We invite our clients to take a backward glance at this “street” and ask themselves what circumstances have led them here – things both within and beyond their control.

Candace¹ has worked as a patient care technician in a local hospital for three years. She has a warm and calming presence, which serves her as well on the job as it does at home, where she is the mother of five children. When financial struggles made it difficult to maintain her apartment, Candace and her children moved in with family. Soon afterward, her family members were evicted from the apartment, and Candace and her children were evicted along with them.

Desperate to keep her family together, Candace asked friends and relatives for support. After being turned away, she contacted the children's father for help. He told Candace that the children would be welcome to stay with him for as long as necessary. Candace was glad to find shelter for her children, but she did not feel comfortable staying there herself, and she had nowhere else to go.

After her first night homeless, Candace called 211, the United Way's help line, and was referred to the Housing Resource Center (HRC) of Catholic Charities Community Services. She recalls trying to contact the HRC multiple times a day for six days straight. After seven nights without a home, Candace and her children were referred to Gateway180.

¹ Name changed to preserve client's confidentiality.

THE TURN LANE

The Turn Lane is an “in-between” stage where clients decide which way they must go in order to end homelessness for their family – and begin drawing up a plan to get there.

Being reunited with her children was a joy for Candace, but she also knew that the coming days would bring many challenges. Gateway180’s emergency shelter gave Candace’s family the comforts of a place to sleep, three meals a day, and new friends – especially an elderly couple who was staying across the hall – to support them on their journey. With these basic needs met, the harder work of planning for a stable future would need to begin.

Candace says that sometimes she felt overwhelmed by all the tasks before her: applying for housing (and all the paperwork and document collection that goes along with that), maintaining employment while staying in the shelter, planning to pay down her debts, and, through it all, finding the strength to move beyond the painful events of her recent past. At times she would start to think, “I can’t do this.” But Candace also knew that Gateway180’s staff sincerely wanted to help. “It was easy to open up and let them know, this is what I need help with,” she recalls. “They give you options instead of telling you no.”

TRANSITION DRIVE

Transition Drive opens up when families move from our emergency shelter into transitional housing. With a safe place to call their own, families have an opportunity to regroup and start working through the challenges their household faces, whether it be debt, mental illness, or memories of past abuse.

Despite the doubts she struggled with while staying in the emergency shelter, Candace proved her resilience. She completed the program at the

shelter in 45 days, and in November she moved into a three-bedroom apartment, one of Gateway180's transitional housing units.

"I learned," she says, "if I tell myself I can do it, I'll be able to do it, whatever it is. It's best to stick with what I started, and it'll be better in the end." In the six short months that Candace has been staying in transitional housing, she has more than lived up to these words. With Gateway180 subsidizing rent and utility costs, Candace has been able to save money and has started paying down her debts. And, no longer needing to work long hours just to keep up with her bills, she has finally had time to go back to school. She has enrolled in nursing school and is on track to become a Registered Nurse in 2016.

The best news is, Candace has made so much progress in managing her finances and career that she now feels ready to move into permanent housing. She has started putting in applications for her own apartment.

INDEPENDENCE HIGHWAY

Families on Independence Highway have reached a state of stability. This does not mean they'll never need anyone's help again; rather, it means they know and make use of the resources and support systems that can help to keep them stable.

Candace's long-term plan is to finish school, get a home of her own, and start saving for her kids to go to college and for her own retirement. Her journey is not yet over, but, Candace says, "I feel like I'm making progress toward what I want."

Candace acknowledges the difficulty of adjusting to Gateway180's program: "Being an adult, it was hard to follow rules and have somebody else tell you what to do, and you have to do it that way. But," she adds, "if you do that in the beginning, the end of the process looks much brighter, and you can smile and say, 'I did it.'"