

JUST WORDS

The Stories of Working People In Our Community

Episode 26: Beth

Welcome to Just Words—the stories of working people in our community.

Beth was 42 and a single mom to two kids when she found out she was pregnant. She lost the job she had held for 7 years because it didn't offer maternity leave or flexible hours. She slipped into depression. After she had her baby, she began using drugs. She got evicted. Her sister cared for her kids, but for a time Beth lived on the street. And then she went to rehab. When she was ready to move on, options were limited.

When I was getting ready to leave rehab, there was different places. The few that I had didn't take kids. It was just you, or you had to pay so much. And I wasn't working yet, I was still in treatment. I needed someplace to go to get back on my feet, to get to work, I had nothing.

Beth was lucky to find a place at Sarah's House, an emergency shelter and transitional housing center located at Fort Meade. It's a partnership of Catholic Charities and Anne Arundel county. Her first stop was their emergency shelter.

I was there for about 3 months and I saved and worked the entire time. And then after you save so much you have the opportunity to move to transitional. You have to be interviewed to make sure you are eligible; you're trying to better yourself so you can get on your feet, so it will benefit you. And then you move in and you go from there.

I got goals today, I mean, I'm saving money to be able to move and get a place big enough for the kids and that blows my mind. They are already describing their bedroom to me. I'm really excited about it, I'm happy for them. I'm working at a warehouse but I am thinking about Anne Arundel community college because I want to take up culinary cooking. That's what I want to do and I am going to do it, I am determined to do it. I mean, first priorities come first. I want the kids to be with me, that's my big thing. They want to do it the right way, I told them, it aint a race. I don't want to hurry up and do it too fast because we want to make sure it is right for all of us.

How Beth will manage to feed, shelter, and clothe herself and her three kids on the \$9 an hour she makes is something she is still trying to figure out. But she is grateful to be clean and sober.

I am getting ready to celebrate a year in two months. One year, yes. Feels great. It was hard. When I look back on it now I wonder how I did, how I was able to go through all that and still be sitting here, and to bounce back the way I did.

Sarah's house is one reason Beth is able to succeed. Transitional housing for women is hard to find...it's even more difficult to find a place where kids are permitted. Beth was lucky to find such a place—but how many other women suffer because what Beth had is not available to them?

Music: *Trying Times* by the Montreal Black Community Youth Choir

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