



DEANNA

Background: Deanna was only 12 when her family started to unravel. Once her father got incarcerated, her mother spiraled through addiction. Deanna went to an aunt's house, but always felt like an imposition. By the time she was 16, she had worn out her welcome and moved back with her mother until just shy of 18 when she ran off with a boyfriend to live out of a van--moving it every night so no one would notice---hiding in plain sight. They didn't really get along, but they needed each other, so they stuck together.

Help from Waypoint: Deanna and her boyfriend came to Waypoint's drop-in center, which they'd heard about from people on the street--from whom they'd also learned some survival skills, illegal skills, and how to skirt the authorities.

Deanna recalls feeling ashamed after a few months of coming in to do her laundry, take a shower, and eat a Hot Pocket. She felt that she should have been able to stand on her own two feet, but without a homebase, everything from school to a job seemed out of reach. But Deanna engaged in case management services, got some counseling and resources, and was able to go back to her aunt's place for a while longer. She got a job in food service and each week, paid her aunt a little rent, even though she never asked for it.

Where to from here: A year later, Deanna and her boyfriend are still together, but as friends, both working and sharing an apartment. Now they only fight over the electric bill...but the fact that they have heat and light at all is a win.