

A New Leaf: Telling Untold Stories, Erin and Gabriel's Story

Written by Christina Tetreault
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Do you believe in miracles?

Erin did. Until a series of unforeseeable events stole her hope and left her reeling.

She had believed she was done raising children, until her grandson Gabriel turned three months old. Too quickly, her role as grandmother turned into provider and, eventually, sole care giver for a child with Type 1 diabetes. Her world narrowed, and revolved around keeping Gabriel healthy, safe and loved.

Caring for a healthy young child can be daunting enough. Caring for a sick one overwhelmed Erin. She obsessed about Gabriel's condition.

"I stopped sleeping, worried sick he would slip into a coma from a low blood sugar level. I would get out of my bed 10 times a night when Gabriel was first diagnosed. I knew something bad could happen, so I was always on guard."

The stress took its toll and Erin began struggling to finish work projects on time. As a business analyst, she was used to focusing on the tasks at hand, but her grandson's plight was a constant distraction. When she lost her job, she lost her means of supporting Gabriel. She searched, but couldn't find new work.

"We were evicted from our home," she says softly. "I had a pit in my stomach and felt numb from depression. Caring for Gabriel was all I could manage. I wasn't eating, and everything moved in slow motion. I felt hopeless."

She and Gabriel slept at friends' houses for a while, and then on the floor of a relative's home. Erin borrowed money from a good friend to buy Gabriel's medicine.

"Giving Gabriel as normal a life as possible was my priority," Erin remembers. "I prayed for a miracle to help us find a home."

A friend suggested Erin call A New Leaf for help. She was accepted into the La Mesita Family Homeless Shelter. It was her miracle.

"I was so happy – and immensely relieved. It felt like home from the very start. The residents and staff welcomed Gabriel like he was their own."

The shelter staff is helping Erin find resources in the community and make friends among the families staying there. She looks forward to starting the new job she has just been hired for. Erin's hope for the future has been reborn.

"My grandson's health has improved since we arrived at La Mesita. The staff is focused on our well-being and success. I can finally sleep at night. I have peace of mind."

Each year, A New Leaf shelters provide a safe home for thousands of our community members like Erin and Gabriel. Too often, a single, unexpected, life altering event thrusts a family into homelessness. Too often, it feels like only a miracle can bring freedom from homelessness, domestic violence and personal crisis.

It is the season of miracles.

For more information about A New Leaf programs including tours and how you can help, please contact 480-464-4648 or visit us at www.TurnaNewLeaf.org.

Arizona Foothills Magazine and Azfoothills.com have partnered with the comprehensive, non-profit, and human service agency, [A New Leaf](#), for an incredibly special series; one that is very near and dear to our organization's heart. **"Telling Untold Stories"** will illustrate multi-dimensional and raw stories of real men, women, and families within our communities who have been dealt a tricky hand of cards. These stories are ones of despair - ones of defeat - and, ones of fear. However, these stories become ones of faith - ones of determination - and, ones of hope.

When someone is in an abusive relationship or homeless, they often find themselves struggling to find help, not aware of the community resources

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available to them. [A New Leaf](#) is one of those critical resources. The agency has been a beacon of hope, supporting women and men who experience domestic violence and homelessness.

The mission of [A New Leaf](#) is Helping Families . . . Changing Lives. A New Leaf inspires and supports individuals and families in their journey to lifelong independence. The agency operates Autumn House, a domestic violence facility in the East Valley, as well as Faith House, a domestic violence shelter and transitional housing resource in the West Valley as well as a number of homeless shelters for those in crisis.

Last year, [A New Leaf](#) served nearly 21,943 individuals with resources, from immediate shelter, transitional housing, basic needs, job assistance, counseling and after school programs. Victims of domestic violence are able to start a new life due to the care and support of A New Leaf's staff and volunteers. Founded in 1971, A New Leaf is dedicated to making lives better and fighting against domestic violence and homelessness in our state.