

A New Leaf: Telling Untold Stories, One Mother's Hope

Written by Karah Van Kammen

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by Candy Thompson

She spent her early childhood in suburbia, never realizing how difficult it was for her mother, a single parent, to maintain that home and provide for her family's needs. Stephanie didn't understand she was living in an unstable home. Her father was in and out of her life until he left for good when she was twelve years old. "That's when I first learned what it was like to be homeless," she said. "I can remember hiding under bridges on many rainy nights, trying to keep dry."

"My mom never complained as a single parent and I didn't realize how difficult it was for her raising me. Now I'm raising my own children and as an adult, I continued to fall into the same pattern, making the same mistakes," she added, "until I found A New Leaf."

Throughout her teen years and early adulthood, Stephanie had been what is referred to as chronically homeless. As a result of some of her own poor decisions, she lost touch with her mom. She spoke on the challenges she faced and how she handled them in the past compared to how she does today. "I didn't know there was a better, smarter way to do things. I felt lost and alone. I didn't have anyone to go to for advice."

Now, Stephanie considers how large a laundry load she has before she runs the washer. She often uses cloth diapers when she needs to. She spends more time considering her growing family's circumstances and prioritizes when making decisions. Through life skills training, Stephanie has learned how to responsibly manage her finances to meet her family's needs – defining the true intent of "a hand up" rather than "a hand out."

She further explained that it wasn't until she found A New Leaf and received our wrap-around services that she started making progress toward a more permanent housing solution. She has been residing in A New Leaf's affordable housing apartments for just over a year. For the first time in many years, she has found a home. Her steady course demonstrates the tremendous impact resulting from the caring support of people like you.

Stephanie expressed the familiar words we often hear, "I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't found A New Leaf. Now my children have a roof over their heads and I have people to talk to when I need to be lifted up. I've learned so much. I've even started to rebuild my relationship with my mom."

Stephanie's heartfelt message to you is this, "These services have given me hope. Without them, we wouldn't have anything. There are so many families that deal with many barriers that A New Leaf works through. Without you, a lot of kids would go without."

Today, there are more and more families, like Stephanie's, who are one paycheck or unexpected incident away from losing their homes. The homeless population is growing and the results are devastating to so many individuals and to our communities. But thanks to you, our supporters, we are making an enormous difference, one family at a time.

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 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.

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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.

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.