

why your donations matter

sandy's story

After a long, very cold winter of living in my jeep and running out of every penny in my pocket, reality hit me like a ton of bricks. One would think losing your home, your family and your job would hit you harder than losing your jeep and every penny to your name, but in my story that is not the case. I felt I still had a sense of worth as I had a vehicle and money for gas. I was forced to turn that over and that is when I felt the ton of bricks smash me to the ground. I remember feeling "life as I know it has completely ended...." That was until I heard about the YWCA in Binghamton.



Sandy, VINES' Coordinator of Columbus Park Community Garden, works on her garden plot.

In April of 2013 I surrendered to the fact that I needed help and needed it fast. I entered the Emergency Shelter at the YWCA and remember feeling more alone in the company of other women than I did while living solely in my truck. It took a few weeks to adjust to my new living quarters and my new social cohorts, but I fought through the emotions and tried hard to keep the focus on getting help for myself.

Staff at the YWCA were always willing to help, listen and give advice. This was the beginning of my new journey. I completed a long-term housing application and was accepted into an apartment within the YWCA. **I started feeling a sense of worth again.** I quickly began sessions with my social worker working on my daily struggles and life's barriers. It was very painful to look at my life in these sessions, but in the long run it is exactly what I needed as it **gave me hope** and determination for my future.

As time progressed I realized I had to face my own financial crisis. My once stable bank account was running in the negatives and I had bank fees tripling by the months, unpaid bills accruing interest by the week and collection agencies calling me daily. At this point I was thousands and thousands of dollars in debt. I realized I needed to look into bankruptcy as there was no possible way I would ever manage payment plans or pay offs, which all creditors were suggesting. I filed for bankruptcy in April of 2014 and it was awarded. Those bricks that smashed me down a year ago were immediately lifted and I was up and back on my two feet again. I was starting to have a glimpse of light in my dark days and as time progressed my dark days became fewer and I knew I had bright days to come.

The YWCA has given me so much and I am forever grateful for the staff, the support and a place to call "home." I strive to give back daily. I am always willing to help another person that is where I was when I entered the shelter and offer the advice that was my ticket to happiness. I am proud at what looks back at me each time I look in the mirror.

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca

I truly feel if I didn't find the YWCA I would never be where I am today and where I can be in the future.