

Buckner Family Pathways helps mother escape hopelessness

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DALLAS—It was 6 p.m. when Leticia Harley, her 2-month-old son and 2-year-old daughter could re-enter the emergency homeless shelter in Dallas. They would file in line early, three among many, looking for a warm meal and a safe bed at night and breakfast in the morning before being forced to leave the next day.

“I felt like there was no hope,” she said. “I felt like a skeleton moving around.”

A staff person at the shelter noticed Harley and her children and discovered she was taking classes at Northlake College, part of the Dallas County Community College District. She saw Harley was driven to improve her life—for herself and her family.

Referred to Buckner Family Pathways

The staff member referred the woman and her children to Buckner Family Pathways in Dallas, which provides housing for single-parent families and empowers them to grow while continuing their education.



Leticia Harley Harley was amazed when she met Family Pathways in Dallas Director Cynthia Rentie, who gave her a tour of the campus and explained what the ministry offered. In November 2013, she started the program.

She soon discovered her new apartment was more than a place to live. It was a place of healing and hope. After suffering physical and emotional abuse, Harley didn't trust anyone. She built walls to protect herself and her children—and to hide her pain. Her experience in the homeless shelter compounded those feelings, and she lost her sense of self-worth.

But through counseling and interacting with other Family Pathways residents, Harley discovered who she is. She embraced her strengths. She found people she could trust, individuals who would help, not hurt, her.

'Like having another family'

As an admitted bad cook, Harley said other residents invited her family over to eat regularly. The mothers worked together to get their children to school and pick them up.

“My experience has been fantastic,” she said. “It’s like having another family. My family is in New Jersey. I don’t have any support here. The women here are like family.”

Harley is a vital part of that family. She’s gifted academically and willing to help others. She tutors other moms, guides them on what classes to take and even helped one mother earn a full scholarship.

Her nursing classes proved vital as well. A brother of one of the Family Pathways residents had been feeling ill but didn’t want to go to the doctor. At the family’s request, Harley agreed to visit with him as a precautionary measure. She urged him to go to the hospital quickly. He did the next morning and was rushed to the intensive care unit. Now, he’s improving.

Building healthy relationships and self-esteem

“Harley really blossomed in the Family Pathways community,” Rentie said. “She learned how to build healthy relationships with others, and she found that she has value. She’s been an incredible addition to our family.”

Working together with the other residents has helped Harley grow.

“I got stronger as a person, as a student, as a mom,” she said. “I think I’ve transformed.”

Harley is pursuing a nursing degree at El Centro College and works in the emergency room at Parkland Memorial Hospital. She has found fulfillment in caring for others, particularly the homeless and poor, and she shares her story as a way to connect with them while they’re in the hospital.

“I’ve been able to build self-esteem,” she said. “I can use my circumstances to help others. I can develop relationships with friends, coworkers and other people.”

Her hard work at school and in the emergency room is paying off. Recently,

she was hired by CareFlite to help transfer patients from one medical center to another.

“God has a plan for me,” she said. “I don’t know what it is, but he is opening doors for me.”