



United Way of Greater Plymouth County 2022 - 23 Success Stories

Lorenzo's Story



Lorenzo doesn't usually answer his phone while he's in church. But on one recent Sunday, he knew he needed to answer it. "It felt like the world stood still for a moment," he said. Lorenzo received word from a Diversion Specialist at a United Way funded partner agency that there was an apartment unit available. After 11 years experiencing homelessness, he finally had a home of his own. Lorenzo became homeless in 2011 after a series of events that included being displaced by a house fire and then a death in his family. He also struggled with addiction, which resulted in years of starts and stops in his path to regain stable housing.

"I know I deserved better. Being on the street, that's not me," he said. Last year, our partner agency formed a Triage Department, adding staff specializing in street outreach and homelessness diversion and prevention. At the time, Lorenzo was helped to get off the street and into a hotel that was being used during the pandemic. Having his own private space in shelter was the start he needed. From there, he began working with the triage team to search for housing, look for a job, and stabilize his life. He reconnected with family and started to find peace with himself. In February, Lorenzo moved into his very own apartment where he receives case management services to support his stability in housing. Lorenzo wakes up every day thankful to be in his own place. His advice to others struggling with homelessness: "Never give up. Keep your faith."

Student Success



United Way funded partner agency worked closely with a student participating in the college's Respiratory Care program from Fall 2020 through Spring 2022. She first reached out for support from the college during the Fall of 2021 when she needed as many resources as possible to support herself and her son financially. She connected with the Center for Basic Needs, and soon discovered that she could receive direct support through the college for many additional barriers she was facing outside of her responsibilities as a student funded by United Way.

During the last 10 months, she connected with the food pantry on campus, finding ways to stretch her income as a part-time security guard and connected with mental health counseling resources as she navigated the experiences associated with adjustments to her family. This student was also connected to pro-bono legal services to support her throughout her divorce, and subsequent hearings regarding the future she was creating for her and her son. She often made time to stop into our offices solely to voice her appreciation, and to make sure we were doing well (a trait that will take her far in the world of patient care). She successfully graduated from her Respiratory Care program this past May. Since then, she has been offered 2 positions at hospitals in the South Shore, and has passed the health boards on her first attempt to become a Certified Respiratory Therapist. Her sights are set

on taking the boards again in the near future, to become a Registered Respiratory Therapist.

“Home for the Holidays”



Thanks to United Way funding, one of our partner agencies was able to help a single mother that was struggling to make ends meet. She was in need of food and support. Fortunately, she found an apartment for her 3 kids, but she could only afford the deposit. She needed help paying the first month's rent to be able to get settled. Thanks to the LIVE UNITED Fund at United Way, our partner agency was able to help her pay her rent, so she could provide a safe place for her and her family. This also helped them be able to have a home to celebrate the holidays.

Marissa's Story



United Way funded ImagineARTS program works in the classroom to help strengthen pre-literacy skills among preschool and kindergarten students. It targets specific literacy skills such as sequencing, rhyming, and re-telling through weekly arts-integrated literacy instruction, professional development for classroom teachers, and a bridge to reading and the arts for families. "Marissa's" teacher shared with her story.

"She walks into the classroom after having to relocate, scared and unsure of her new school. Everyone has been friends for four months already. Will she fit in? Will she get along with anyone?"

This is how Marissa joined my classroom at the end of December this year. She had transferred from another school in Brockton. She spent her first week sitting in silence and completing all her work quickly and accurately. At recess, M would just walk around by herself watching others play. When I would talk to her, she would answer in a low whisper voice. Two weeks later, things started to change.

As soon as ImagineARTS began, Marissa's face lit up and she recognized the instructor from her former school. As

a result, she knew the routine, remembered the songs, and joined right in. The other students quickly noticed Marissa's excitement and started smiling and laughing with her as they danced and sang along with. The next morning, several students greeted her with hugs and smiles. At recess, a few of the classmates went out of their way to include Marissa. As the year continued, her confidence grew. She continued to play with more friends, sang louder and louder, and she began to raise her hand to answer questions, although her voice was still very soft. Now as the school year is ending, she is speaking up all the time. She is laughing out loud, completing all her assignments quickly, and answers questions so everyone can hear her. This confidence will follow her as she moves onto first grade.

Spreading Warmth



United Way partner agency noticed one of the parents at their nursery never wore a jacket when dropping off her child despite the winter temperatures. The mother was also falling behind in paying her tuition fee. She was about to withdraw her child from the center because she could no longer afford the expense of daycare. She was working two jobs to support her daughter and her elderly mother that lived with them. When the organization's director asked the mom into her office to ask if she needed a coat, the woman broke down crying. She was struggling doing everything in her power to keep her small family fed, clothed and sheltered. She shared she couldn't afford a coat for the winter and that she was barely scrapping by, even with working 80 hours a week. The weight lifted from her shoulders when she was told her child could be provided a scholarship thanks to

United Way's LIVE UNITED fund was insurmountable. She was crying tears of joy when she learned she could continue to bring her daughter to the center and that she wasn't alone.