

Janice Barnes

The Road to Success Can Be a Tough Journey

Janice is a single mom raising three teenagers. She works full-time and is saving money for a down payment on a home. This may sound typical of many families in our community until you talk to Janice about her journey to this stage of her life.

Three years ago Janice arrived at a local emergency shelter with her three children, their personal belongings and no identification papers to prove they even existed. She was a "nobody." This was the outcome of a hasty escape from a controlling, abusive husband. A stormy relationship of 14 years had finally ended.

As a child, Janice had been taught to respect others and to be a responsible individual. When she grew up she fell in love, married, and was excited about raising her own family. Her determination never wavered in spite of the verbal and physical abuse she endured. However, it did take its toll on her personally. "At the end, I had no self-esteem and I blamed myself for everything that was happening to me. I was a mess." It took all the determination she could muster, and with the support of her children she finally made the break.

Having overcome the trauma of her courageous escape, it wasn't long before Janice was referred to Tabor's Shelter to Independent Living program. Her goal was to find longer term, safe, affordable housing and to get her children stabilized in school. She was determined, and with the help of her Tabor counselor finally found an apartment in a safe community. It had been a long, tough search but her determination paid off. In the meantime, Janice registered for career development testing to help her decide training and job-skills direction. Food service was her preferred route and Janice was hired for part-time work at a local restaurant, preparing ingredients for the salad bar. It wasn't long before her skills and determination to succeed were noticed by her supervisor. She was hired full-time and placed in charge of the salad bar. "You have no idea how proud I was when I saw my name on my first paycheck. This was mine! I was somebody! I didn't need to ask for handouts anymore."

Having accomplished her first step of finding a safe place to live and paying her own rent, Janice was ready for the next step. Together with her Tabor counselor, Janice set new goals for herself and her family. With renewed self-confidence she enrolled in Tabor's Family Savings Account program [now **Matched Savings Accounts**] - a program designed to help low-income families achieve asset-building goals. Janice's goal was to save enough for a down payment on a house of her own. This also meant learning the responsibilities of home ownership and budgeting skills. Janice began the process by entering Tabor's home pre-purchase counseling program [now **First-Time Homebuyer Services**].

Today, almost two years later, Janice is still employed at the same restaurant, with added responsibility of training new associates. She is confident about her future. She has a close family relationship with her children, practicing and teaching them the values of life. All three had summer jobs this year. This included a learning experience for budgeting some of their income for upcoming school year necessities. As for Janice, her self-esteem restored, she says, "My counselors believed in me and that helped me believe in myself. I am so thankful for everything my Tabor counselors have done for me." She is on track to buy her first home next year. Janice is an excellent role model for others facing tough choices like she did.