

Samantha's Story

Samantha was raised by her adopted mother from the age of two years old. After experiencing conflict in the family, she found herself homeless at the age of 16. To pursue a better life, she moved from Springfield, MA to New Haven into the home of her future mother-in-law. After the move, she eventually learned that this home was not stable and found herself homeless again with two children. She was young, scared and unsure of what her future would bring. Samantha heard about United Way of Connecticut's 211, so she gave it a try and dialed.



Samtha's 211 Contact Specialist helped her secure space at a New Haven shelter called Columbus House. Adjusting to her new environment had its challenges, but Samantha had a sense of hope, and she kept taking action for herself and her boys.

Samantha got connected with a Coordinated Access Network Case Manager through United Way of Greater New Haven who encouraged her to enroll her sons in an Early Head Start program. This program was facilitated by Elizabeth Celotto Child Care Center where they provide free child care if the parent wishes to pursue their education.

A bit apprehensive about leaving her sons in a new environment at first, Samantha was invited to take a tour of the facility. She was soon convinced that this was the right place for her children. And with only two more classes left to earn her diploma, Samantha enrolled herself in high school as well.

Through community resources like United Way, Samantha was able to move out of the shelter and secure a two-bedroom apartment her family could call home.

Samantha faced highs and lows throughout her journey at such a young age. She wanted to give up at times, but she didn't let herself, and with the encouragement from her Early Head Start support system they wouldn't let her give up either. She used community resources that were available to her and was able to turn her life around, not only herself, but for her boys and their futures.

Today, Samantha is a graduate of United Way's Parent Leadership Training Institute, a program that equips parents and caregivers to effectively advocate for their children and their communities, and she recently had her 3rd child.

"These programs are very important for people like me" Samantha said, "and not only for people like me, but also for people in the community as a whole. We need these resources. "These programs are a second chance for us to have help and to know that we're not alone."