A LIFE TRANSFORMED AND A LIFE BEGINNING
LifeHouse resident delivers a healthy baby girl and they now have a safe home and a promising future

Brennan, a petite 21-year-old, was pregnant, homeless and scared when she turned to LifeHouse Crisis Maternity Home. Brennan’s home life had never been stable. Her father was a drug dealer; her mother used drugs and struggled with mental illness. There was time spent in foster care. At 16, she met a 25-year-old man who introduced her to drugs. She was often homeless, sleeping on the streets or in a shelter.

“I felt like it was a miracle,” Brennan said on finding LifeHouse.

At 21, Brennan discovered she was pregnant. Her current boyfriend was in jail for drug offenses, and Brennan had nowhere to go. With no food, no means of transportation, and no resources, Brennan felt hopeless. In desperation, she googled “place for pregnant women” and LifeHouse came up. Brennan said that she stared at the computer screen. “I felt like it was a miracle,” she said. So with God’s help, Brennan found her way to LifeHouse.

LifeHouse provided Brennan with a safe place to call home, clothing and nutritious meals, as well as prenatal care and comprehensive support services. All residents can stay for up to one year after delivery as they work to achieve permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

Brennan lived at LifeHouse for 16 months and completely turned her life around.

- Complete drug treatment program. Check.
- Quit smoking. Check.
- Study for and obtain GED. Check.
- Get driver’s license. Check.
- Obtain full-time work. Check.

Brennan never missed her prenatal appointments, or LifeHouse classes, or work. After the birth of her healthy baby girl, Brennan did not slow down or lose her determination. She continued to live at LifeHouse and pursue her goals. She worked two jobs and saved her money. She took parenting and child development classes, and met with her Parents as Teachers educator. She continued counseling and learned to budget.

>> Continue story on page 2.

Brennan is now involved in LifeHouse’s After-Care Program, and we can’t wait to see what another year will bring for her and her daughter!

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Thank you for caring.

LifeHouse staff surprised Brennan with a special farewell and gifts on her move-out day. Everyone was emotional but happy and oh-so-proud of Brennan!

- Buy used car. Check.
- Tags and license. Check
- Insurance. Check.

Her next goal was to save enough for a down payment and deposits on her own place to live, and she once again succeeded. In May 2018, Brennan and her daughter moved into a safe and clean rental house with a large yard.

- Obtain place of her own. Check.

With job, housing and transportation tackled, Brennan is now focused on pursuing her education. She is taking community college classes while still working full-time.

- Start college. Check.

In Brennan's words:

"This was my second chance. Before I didn't know how to be an adult. I needed the structure that LifeHouse gave me. I learned that I can do this. I realized it's possible now. It feels really good to have a job—to be able to keep a job. It feels so good to be a productive member of society! I want to be proud of where I live. I want a good life for my child. I've worked really hard. I have to do this for her. I never would have done any of this if I hadn't been here. Without LifeHouse, I wouldn't have had my daughter at all. I'm really grateful and happy."

We think you may have left a few items off your list, Brennan.

- Hard work. Check.
- Determination. Check.
- Positive attitude. Check.
- Never give up. Hope. Check.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF SOUTHERN MISSOURI PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Developmentally Disabled Service Coordination
- Disaster Preparedness, Response & Long-term Recovery
- GoodFinds Resale Shop
- Homelessness Prevention
- Home Repair & Rebuilding for Disaster Survivors and Low-Income Seniors
- Housing and Financial Counseling
- Income Tax Preparation Assistance
- LifeHouse Crisis Maternity Home
- Mental Health & Family Counseling
- Pregnancy & Parenting Support/Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies Program
- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance) Enrollment
- Support Services for Veterans and their Families
- Youth Mentoring/BUDS Program

Everything featured in this newsletter is only possible because of donors like you. On behalf of all those we serve, thank you!
It is our neighbors like these who are to

DISASTER RELIEF AND HOME REBUILDING PROGRAM
YOUNG WIDOW LOSES HOME IN TORNADO, BUT REBUILDING IS NOW POSSIBLE BECAUSE YOU CARED

Samantha is a young widow raising her daughter and two grandchildren. She also has two adult children. She and her husband had worked on their home in Joplin and were excited to raise their family there. But life didn’t go as planned. In 2008, Samantha lost her husband in an accident, and in 2011, the Joplin tornado completely destroyed their home.

Samantha did not give up the dream she had shared with her husband. She had multiple offers on her lot but she refused to sell. She prayed she would someday be able rebuild their home on their lot. However, there were many obstacles. Samantha had only carried mortgage insurance on the house so there was nothing to help her recover, and her financial situation prevented her from being able to obtain a traditional home loan to rebuild.

Samantha was eventually referred to Catholic Charities. Her case manager worked with her on budgeting and financial management and enrolled her in the Rebuilding Homes/Rebuilding Lives program. This summer we broke ground on their new home which is being built on her special lot.

Fifteen-year-old Caeli was so excited, saying “They’re finally starting to rebuild the house and it’s a miracle, and I’m so glad God did this for us, because my family has been waiting for this for so long and we’ve been through so much. Don’t know how to say how awesome I’m feeling, and I’m so grateful.”

We look forward to continuing this exciting journey with this family.

With the help you make possible, Samantha’s family is thrilled to rebuild their home AND build long-term financial stability.

THIS GRANDMOTHER’S HOME WAS BEYOND REPAIR BUT WITH VOLUNTEER LABOR AND YOUR SUPPORT, WE FOUND A WAY TO HELP.

In order to stay there, Nancy tried to make repairs and built stilts for her bed to lift it off the wet floor. A generator she bought to help dry out the house was stolen off her porch.

The house was nearly uninhabitable and Nancy was desperate when she came to Catholic Charities. Billy, CCSOMO’s Construction Manager, evaluated the home and determined that it was beyond repair and should be torn down. Because of the nearby creek, rebuilding on the same spot was out of the question.

After many months of searching, a small house in Poplar Bluff was found that could be repaired and made habitable. Volunteer labor was used to get it ready for Nancy and her granddaughter to move in. Once moved in, the volunteers then tore down the old house.

Nancy and her granddaughter are grateful to have a safe and sanitary home. Nancy says that her granddaughter now calls it “the house that Jesus built” because they had been praying to Jesus for a new home!

Nancy’s granddaughter now calls their home “the house that Jesus built.”

Nancy and her granddaughter with Billy, Catholic Charities Construction Manager, and a wonderful group of volunteers who provided the labor to repair Nancy’s new home.
HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION SERVICES
WITHOUT YOUR HELP, THIS FAMILY WOULD HAVE BEEN HOMELESS WITHIN A WEEK.

Wendy is a hard-working single mother of four children, with a dream to become a registered nurse. She obtained her CNA, and is now attending Cape Career Center where she will receive her LPN in September 2016. Her ultimate goal is to become an RN. She receives financial aid but it only covers tuition and books. She attends school full-time and works 12 hour shifts on the weekends (Friday through Sunday) at Southeast Hospital.

Wendy's ex-husband provides no financial help. Although Wendy works hard, there was not enough to cover the monthly rent and utilities. She fell behind, and when she came into Catholic Charities office, she had an eviction notice in hand—for the next week. Wendy calls her referral to Catholic Charities "a God-send." Brenda, Wendy's case manager, got to work immediately. The landlord was willing to work with her because Wendy had been a good tenant. Brenda stopped the eviction and paid the rent arrears and utility bills. She continues to work with Wendy to achieve stability.

Brenda is very proud of all Wendy has done, saying "She's really good at budgeting her money. She doesn't spend on anything not absolutely necessary—no cable, no extra's."

In Wendy's words, "The help I received freed me from an eviction and possible homelessness. With help with budgeting and setting financial goals, I see myself getting back on my feet."

Wendy makes it clear that she wants "to be self-sufficient and take care of my family." She told Brenda, "I know my day will come and I will be successful. I'm lucky, I have good kids and they support everything I do and know I want to become a nurse."

"Your care for one another is care for Jesus himself." Pope Francis

FINANCIAL COUNSELING PROGRAM
With a little guidance, single mom finds a new way to live

Sharon, a client in our Financial Counseling program, tells her own story:

"I was referred to Catholic Charities by another agency due to my financial situation. I went through a rough divorce which left me in over my head, and no direction to go. Every day I had at least 10 creditors calling and my paycheck was already garnished for another bill. With four kids and already working full time and more if it was available, I was lost.

Once I came to Catholic Charities and sat down to see what they could do to help, I knew my life was going to work out in time. It was the light at the end of the tunnel I needed to see.

Through Catholic Charities I have been set up with a HUD certified worker who has not only helped me see the light, but placed me in an entire new way of life. I have been shown how to budget better, got debts paid through better management of my money. And I've even got my credit score up to an acceptable number that has allowed me to get a secured credit card.

Without the patience, time, love and support Catholic Charities has offered me, I would still be drowning in debt and struggling to make it from day to day."
SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES
Disabled Veteran faces eviction from home on snowy day, but with your support he’s settled into a new warm place of his own.

BT is a disabled 82-year-old Korean War Veteran and recent widower living in Branson. After his wife died, he hadn’t been able to keep up on his house payments. When referred to Catholic Charities, the bank had already foreclosed on his home and it was too late to stop the eviction. BT had a hard time understanding.

In the first nine months of Catholic Charities’ Veterans Program, 127 Veteran households have been served. 80% of these Veterans were homeless, and 20% were at immediate risk of becoming homeless.

Chris, his Catholic Charities case worker said, “BT just couldn’t believe he would be kicked out of the home he had for so many years.” Chris helped BT apply for apartments. They had to find one that would let him keep his loyal but huge dog. It was the week before the eviction before BT was able to accept that he truly had to move. Catholic Charities provided the down payment and deposits.

It was in the middle of winter with ice storms and snow.

Chris continued: “It was the day before eviction. My supervisor and I stayed in touch with the Sheriff’s office, and while they hated to do it, they had to evict the veteran even in this weather. We arranged for movers to come and complete packing and move the few things the veteran could fit in his new smaller apartment. However, BT’s home was on the top of a hill, and the movers cancelled out at the last minute because they didn’t think they could safely get their truck up and down the hill in the snow.”

“My supervisor and I decided we would just have to move the veteran ourselves. I have an all-wheel drive and we called the Branson Chapter of the Disabled American Veterans. They offered to come with a couple of men and a pick-up truck. We put on our snow boots and got to work. The guys with the DAV came, but with only two-wheel drive on their truck, it took them a few tries to make it up the hill. Between all of us, we got the veteran into his new apartment.”

“We bought him food and arranged for his television service to be connected. When we left, BT was settled on his couch, under a blanket, in time to watch his favorite show, Jeopardy.”

Chris continues to visit this veteran and work with him to ensure that his situation remains stable.

WITH CASE MANAGEMENT AND SHORT-TERM FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, THIS VETERAN GETS BACK ON HIS FEET

Fernando, a U.S. Marine Corps and Army Reserves Veteran, was on the verge of homelessness when he was introduced to Karen Auner, Catholic Charities’ SSVF Case Manager in Cape Girardeau. “They came and told me ‘OK, we’re going to help you,’ and they did,” Fernando said. “I want to work, I want to stay clean, I want to stay away from problems. So they gave me an opportunity to get up, on my own.”

Fernando described Karen as a “magician” in the way she made things happen for him. Karen helped him find an affordable place to live and provided rent and utility deposits. She reached out to Hope International, an agency in Bernie, Missouri, that provided Fernando with furniture.

Fernando now has a job in Poplar Bluff and is self-sufficient. “I think I can manage now,” he said. “I’m happier now, and I’m humbled.”

Fernando says he’s “looking for a better tomorrow.”
HEALTHY MOMS, HEALTHY BABIES
ALTERNATIVES TO ABORTION PROGRAM

God leads homeless, pregnant woman to the right place

Crystal, Catholic Charities case manager in the Sikeston office, tells this story about one of her clients:

I met Sylvia by chance as she sat in our waiting area at 7:00 in the morning. I had come to work a bit early to get a few things gathered before I started my day and as I walked in, there sat Sylvia. I asked if she was waiting on someone next door and she shook her head. I noticed her vest and name tag and made small talk about her getting rest before work. Her eyes filled with tears as she explained to me that she didn’t have a home and had been walking with nowhere to go. I looked down at her again, and noticed that she was pregnant.

“I usually don’t come in this early, but I needed to get a few things this morning to take with me. Don’t you think that’s odd that of all days I picked TODAY to come in early and you are sitting here?” I smiled at her. Her tears spilled over. I explained to her about Catholic Charities and the Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies program that I am blessed to case manage. That day I enrolled Sylvia into our program. We provided emergency shelter at a local motel. While working together, Sylvia explained her situation to me and how she couldn’t afford deposits for rent and utilities. Sylvia and I worked together to look for a rental that she could afford on her income and were able to move her into an apartment within a week. Catholic Charities was able to pay the deposit and first month’s rent and provide something more than secure housing for this expectant mother. We provided hope.

We continue to provide services to Sylvia through monthly education focusing on prenatal health and parenting issues. We also connected Sylvia to other services in the community to assist her in preparing for her baby. When her doctor said she could no longer work, we began assisting Sylvia in paying rent until she can return to her job. Thanks to you, there are no more tears, and Sylvia will have a safe, secure place to bring her baby home.

Our staff in Sikeston and Van Buren offer supportive services, education and financial assistance to women who are experiencing a crisis pregnancy and have no resources.

50% - 55% MISSOURI STATE TAX CREDITS MAY BE AVAILABLE FOR YOUR DONATIONS.
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT CCSOMO.ORG OR CALL (417) 720-4213.

You’re a vital part of our stories!

To ensure that our stories of help and hope can continue, please donate today.

Whose life will you help make better today?

YES, I want to help our neighbors in need. Here is my gift of $__________.

You may use this form and mail your donation in the envelope included with this newsletter.

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