

DECEMBER 2018

## ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS MY TWO FRONT TEETH

Mary Groves  
Community LINC Graduate

“It's true, one year ago I did want my two front teeth for Christmas, but more than that I wanted a place for my two children and me to call home.

As a mother with two young sons, I never thought I would find myself homeless. Originally from Arkansas, I lived there my whole life until moving to Kansas City for a better job. Six months later, life happened in a big way – my employer downsized, and I was let go. I searched repeatedly for a job to no avail while the rent and utilities started to pile up. To make matters worse, I had a bad accident and lost my two front teeth. With the risk of losing our home, getting my teeth fixed was not an option. I thought nothing could get worse. Then it did.

My landlord asked me to move out, my world crashed down and not all the seas in the world could measure up to the tears I cried. I felt like the worst parent in the world. A relative took my sons while I tried to figure out where we could go while I spent nights in my car in a Lowe's parking lot so I could have Wi-Fi to find help. The new job I cherished, my home, my babies – they were all gone within the course of a summer.

I called every day for weeks until I finally found a bed at a shelter before being referred to Community LINC. After going through the process, we got accepted into Community LINC. We were so happy to be together again all under one roof with everything we needed. The end to this nightmare was finally in sight.

After getting settled, my next goal was to find a good job, but fear crept over me any time I looked in the mirror. I knew I had to get a job even with my teeth noticeably missing. My kids gave me the will and motivation to walk into the Employment Services Lab each day.

One day, my phone rang three minutes after submitting a resume and I was asked to do an interview the following day. Connie, the Job Coach, was my angel during this process. She helped me tremendously all along and even gave me a mock interview that day. Still very aware of my appearance, I was concerned about being taken seriously. That's when I decided to do something slightly unorthodox: **I decided to make myself some teeth.**

I went to Walmart and purchased playdough. With a little patience and many failed attempts, I made my own replacement teeth and baked them in the oven. To my surprise, the teeth turned



out fine. I wore them to the interview the next day and landed the job with a good IT company!

I wore my homemade teeth for two months until I could afford to get my teeth permanently fixed. My good work ethic has paid off. I am still at the same job, and I was safe during a layoff and even landed a promotion.

It's been a year since we left Community LINC and I am incredibly grateful for where I am today and the lessons I learned on my journey. Community LINC allowed me to work on myself, budget my money and pay off debts. Because of what I learned, my boys and I are happy and stable in our own place that we call home

”

## HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

We believe that no child or family should have to experience the trauma of homelessness during this time of year. Providing a home for the holidays is one of the greatest gifts you can give. We hope you will consider a gift to Community LINC this giving season as we continue to end family homelessness for over 300 children and their parents. Your gift of:

**\$100** - provides four days of shelter and programming for a child

**\$250** - provides bedding for a family of four

**\$500** - provides employment services and case management for a parent

Every gift makes a difference. Please join our #HomefortheHolidaysKC campaign and make a gift for a family experiencing homelessness. For more options or information contact Teresa McClain at 816.595.5553 or [tmcclain@communitylinc.org](mailto:tmcclain@communitylinc.org)



#HomefortheHolidaysKC



# INVEST IN FAMILIES, INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITY!



Meet Jackie, today, she is a homeowner, owns her own business, and works two jobs. Her son is thriving in school and her daughter is a light of hope for so many – witty, resilient, and so very bright. She is in high school

taking college courses and is interested in robotics, music, artificial intelligence, and design. With a little help from all of us, she is becoming the force she was meant to be and has the confidence to change our world, and I suspect she will! Families like Jackie's need a little support to rebuild their lives. They need Community LINC and friends like you and me. Jackie's episode of homelessness did not define her or her family.

Like many of the families at Community LINC, Jackie refused to let the experience of homelessness define her future. Jackie

worked every aspect of the programs available through Community LINC to achieve stability. With a little help from all of us, she was able to rebuild her life.

It is hard to believe it has been nearly 20 years ago, when I wrote a paper on the most innovative and successful homelessness programs around the Country. That is when I learned about Community LINC and the work they do in our community to permanently end family homelessness. After college, I stayed connected to their work and the amazing outcomes they were achieving. In 2013, my wife Teresa wanted to give me something special for Christmas; she decided to make a gift to Community LINC in my honor. We began volunteering and I eventually joined the board. Today I am honored to serve as the board chair and blessed by the impact it has on my life.

I have learned that the homeless in our community are employed families with low wages and high housing costs; families living so close to the edge that a single car problem or health issue can lead to homelessness. I now understand fully what a blessing it is to have a place to call

home, with warm beds for my children. Sadly, I have also learned many children do not have this luxury.

In fact, right here in our community, thousands of children and their parents are homeless each year! This is simply unacceptable in a city as great as ours.

When we allow ourselves to help and provide a hand-up to families like Jackie's, we enrich all our lives. It changes our perspective. It changes the way we walk through life. And, ultimately, it changes the world. I want to believe that if I ended up homeless someone would be there.

Your investment in families generates community-wide returns that last a lifetime. Thank you for your faithful support.

With thanks and warm wishes for a happy holiday to you and yours,

*Dan Carroll*

Dan Carroll Board Chair



## RENT PARTY 2018

Thank you to everyone that helped make the 2018 Rent Party an incredible night! Nearly 600 guests gathered to Build the Way Home for Kansas City families at the annual fundraiser.



Greg Porter, James Townsend, Kelly Townsend and Gary Cain



Hometown Hero Greg Graves and Event Chair Jessica Chanos



Community LINC Event Chairs and Honorary Host Committee. Front Row: Missy Bruhn, Diane Canaday, Jason Chanos, Jessica Chanos, and Deanna Graves. Back Row: Brad Korris, Dan Hesse, Oscar and Ratana Tshibanda, and Greg Graves. Not present: Debby and Gary Ballard, Roshann Parris and Jeff Dobbs, Molly and Tom Freeman, and Jeanette and Kevin Prenger

## WAY HOME TOUR

Interested in hearing more about how Community LINC's programs permanently end homelessness for families in Kansas City? Join us for a Way Home Tour! Tours are on the first and third Tuesday of every month. The tour is from 4:00-5:00 pm.

RSVP required. Contact Colleen at [development@communitylinc.org](mailto:development@communitylinc.org) or 816.389.8262 to reserve your spot.

JANUARY							FEBRUARY							MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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# GRADUATION

Daniel Barber  
Community Engagement Officer

“I actually had people that believed in me”... “I never thought I would want counseling, but this lady had me telling her everything”... “I hated coming to the computer lab. It was too quiet. Every time I came, I got discouraged, but Ms. Connie wouldn’t let me give up.” These are just a few quotes from some of the families who recently successfully exited Community LINC’s programs.

On October 23rd, Community LINC’s recent graduates, current clients and supporters came together to celebrate recent successes at our biannual graduation celebration.

Staff and volunteers from St. James Catholic Parish, on 39th and Troost, graciously hosted and fed attendees. It was an evening of sharing accomplishments, crying tears of joy and hearing stories of struggle, frustration, personal resilience, the value of support systems, and ultimately SUCCESS! Stories were shared of a mom using her time in our scattered sites program to gain part time employment while working on her nursing degree; of a parent finally experiencing the value of mental wellness coaching. One parent expressed relief and sheer joy over finding a job that pays a livable wage.

A mom accidentally showed up at the wrong location for a job interview but was hired by the other company at a better rate. These are a few of the highlights of this group of 10 graduates.

Each of the stories was unique: many families came to experience homeless through different circumstances: lost jobs, health issues, bad choices or a series of unfortunate events. One theme, however, was consistent. Each family made use of second or third or even fourth chances to gain independence and reach a level of self-sufficient sustainability. Each graduate seemed to forge a special connection to a Community LINC staff member during their experience. Some mentioned Connie’s persistent care, some mentioned Jeannine’s no-nonsense directness, and others were encouraged by their case managers, Victoria and Tylynn, and their consistent direction. From the time they felt the relief and warmth as Holly showed them their new apartment, to the time Andi led them to find their own place, it is clear that Community LINC left an impression on them.

**What  
they don’t  
know is  
they have  
left an  
impression  
on us.**



For staff, hearing how Community LINC made an impact on these families serves as a renewal, a refresher and reminder of WHY we do what we do. We are here to end family homelessness for this generation and the next. It will happen, one celebration at a time.

**COMMUNITY LINC**  
*Ending homelessness. Transforming lives.*  
P.O Box 32697  
Kansas City, MO 64171  
p: 816.531.3727  
f: 816.531.4416  
info@communitylinc.org

nonprofit org  
us postage paid  
kansas city, mo  
permit 6376

# A GIFT TO HONOR

Every year, we are surprised by our faithful friends who make a gift during a very difficult time, the time of the loss of a loved one. Last year, we had many people make gifts in honor of their loved ones, helping their legacy live on.

Families who make a gift during these tough times understand the importance of and need for a safe home to raise a family. A donation to Community LINC is a meaningful way to honor someone special. This gift reflects the desire to make a lasting impact on the lives of others.

To all our wonderful supporters who made a gift in honor of a loved one this year, we thank you. We also thank the rest of you who shared your time, talent and treasures.



**WISHING YOU  
AND YOUR FAMILY  
WONDERFUL  
HOLIDAYS!**