



Donna's Story



“I was always trying to please. I learned a lot: I finally learned how to stand on my own. Now I don't care what someone thinks.”



Even after I had been gone from House of Hope for a year, the Housing team still helped me to find a permanent place to live. I didn't know how to do anything (like getting a credit report) but they were always there to help me.



Rocky Beginnings

Donna was raised in the care of one parent who was an active alcoholic. She had a transient home life and she was absent from school quite often. By the time Donna was 10 years old, her school determined that she was at a first grade comprehension level. Donna overcame many learning obstacles. She lived with her Aunt when she was in High School and held down two jobs. After graduation, she married. “I should have known he was an addict. He did drugs and the abuse was really bad. After 3 years together, he became convinced that he messed up our lives and he committed suicide.”

After that, she stayed clean, worked and went to school. When she was 25, she met another man who had all the same problems and it started all over again. This time, she became pregnant, so she separated from him to keep drugs out of her life. She worked and saved up for an apartment that was near his family so she could have help with the baby. The baby's father took Donna's money and spent it, leaving her with nothing – she was homeless.

Finding Hope

Donna was pregnant when she was sent to House of Hope. She delivered her baby boy, Cole, at Lowell General Hospital with HOH staff by her side. Soon after, Donna fell into deep despair and, leaving the shelter one afternoon to visit Cole's father, took a drug overdose. In the aftermath, the Mass Department of Children and Families put Cole into foster care and Donna went to live at a residential facility for substance abuse. She stayed in close touch with HOH staff by visiting often. “I got a lot of love here. The House of Hope staff is really awesome. They gave me a lot of hope. I stayed strong and knew I would not give up and I would get my boy back.” After many months, she was able to get Cole back into her care. She worked and started school again during that time. The recovery support she received helped her to see how she clung to relationships that were abusive and unhealthy.

Today, after several years of courses and nursing school, Donna is proud that she received her degree as an RN. She learned to trust her instincts and focused on surrounding herself and her children with healthy relationships. Donna is now happily married with three children, including her son, Cole.