

Area Motels Become Temporary Home for Homeless Families

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It was a typical call of desperation as the woman on the end of the telephone pleaded for help to prevent being evicted along with her three children. However, this call was different. The family was not being evicted from an apartment or a house; they were being put out of a local motel where they had lived for only a week. Like many other women with children who lose their apartments or homes, area motels have become the “go-to” emergency option for housing.

Some might say that motels are expensive and wonder why anyone would choose to live there. For homeless women and children, motels have become the immediate place of refuge because, for most, no credit is needed and payment is only required one night at a time.

HER Faith Ministries, Inc., has assisted a number of families who have turned to motels for emergency housing. Our ministry helps women to return to their own apartments, where possible. This might mean that we help them to pay utility bills that have become excessive. It could be helping to locate other housing or helping to find new employment for those who have been laid off.

In December 2016, our ministry assisted two families who were living in area motels after being evicted from their homes. Here are two examples:



Adriana G. (not her real name), 26 years old, never thought that she would be living in a motel with her three boys. But, bad luck turned worse when just before Halloween, she was laid off from her job, lost her car, and lost the apartment where the family had lived for four years. When the family was forced to move to the motel, Adriana’s mate also walked out, leaving Adriana and the boys on their own.

Our ministry was contacted about Adriana’s dilemma in early December. Our ministry was able to work with motel owners to get a discount for the family.

We then asked for donor help to pay the family's motel and emergency food expenses through the first week of the New Year. We also helped Adriana to find employment.

In January, she was able to receive a tax refund and to pay her past utility bill. Now, she and the children are living in a new apartment and are on their way to self-sufficiency and independence.

Rev. Elaine Sanford talked with Adriana about her plans for the future and how she might begin to rebuild circles of family, friends, and church so that in the event of another family crisis, she would have a support system in place.



Sasha B., 21 years old, called the ministry office one afternoon as she sat in the terminal of the transit bus station. Sasha was crying as she told us that her paycheck had suddenly been garnished this week and now she could not pay for the motel where she had been staying.

Sasha and her 19-year-old brother were raised by their father, who suddenly passed away in 2016. The brother moved in with his girlfriend.

But, Sasha could only afford a motel. Her only other family was her estranged mother, whom Sasha learned was still struggling with alcohol and drug addiction. On this day, Sasha learned that her mother had used Sasha's name to secure an apartment in the past. Now, a judgment had been issued, and Sasha was being forced to pay. The amount of the judgment was taking more than half of her paycheck, which was the reason that she could not pay the motel expense.

Rev. Elaine spent several hours over several weeks talking with Sasha about her plans. Sasha was able to set goals for herself and created a budget based on the income she was receiving from her job of five years. The ministry then assisted her in finding an apartment and moving out of the motel. We were able to find a condo owner who was willing to work with Sasha to allow her to pay rent twice per month on the dates that she got paid. The ministry provided Sasha with bus passes so that she would not need to spend her money to ride the bus back and forth to work. And, we purchased emergency food for her first two weeks on her own.

Rev. Elaine also talked with Sasha about building support systems of family and church such that she would have a place to turn in the event of another crisis. Even though Sasha and her brother are estranged from their mother, they might still be able to develop a relationship with her. We also discussed how Sasha might begin a faith journey and develop a church relationship and family.

Today, Sasha is living independently and managing her own affairs. She contacts the ministry office regularly to get advice about decisions she plans to make.

HER Faith Ministries' goal is to help women like Adriana and Sasha to overcome situations of deprivation and struggle to return to lives of self-sufficiency and independence.

The NBA incubates new ministries, supporting social entrepreneurs of faith who are serving their communities in a variety of innovative ways and empowering these Disciples-led health and social service projects to focus on growth, impact, and sustainability. Learn more at nbacares.org/incubate or by contacting Rev. Ayanna Johnson Watkins, Director of the NBA Incubate Initiative, at awatkins@nbacares.org.