

## Sierra House Success Stories

### **Story 1**

Many people have not heard of Sierra House. I for one did not know that such a place existed just a few minutes from my old neighborhood. When situations get rough being a woman can seem like the hardest thing. Trying to keep self-respect, morals, values, while being down and out, tired, lost and also homeless is a lifestyle I wish upon no one.

I came upon Sierra House by a referral that I received at my school. At the time I was 20 years old, working a full time job just so I could try to be what most consider normal while also attending Essex County Community College. An outstanding academic student and loved by everyone, I was in my second semester at the time working hard toward graduating; but living a lie because at the end of each work day and each school night I was faced with the reality that I was a homeless working, college student, working 40 plus hours but spending paycheck after paycheck trying to chase the “American Dream.” I dealt with inconsistencies in my life, including homelessness for almost 2 years before Sierra House.

Early in March 2011 I decided that I was running with no place to go. I finally found someone who was willing to listen and even more willing to help. This lady helped me make a decision that was only for the better. I was pointed towards 11 South Maple Ave. At first, I was skeptical and saying “yuck” in my mind, because I perceived it to be a “homeless shelter.” Making the decision to go to Sierra House was the best thing I could have done for myself. I received love, help, and advice. The living arrangements were more than I expected and better than anything I could have asked for.

The Sierra House staff and especially founder Keely Freeman have impacted my life in such ways that I will never forget. Sierra House wasn't only a roof, or a place with a bed, it was a place to call home. I was able to utilize the program by staying and learning life skills and I am now one semester away from graduating with an associate degree in Social Sciences and have been living independently.

Sierra House has helped me to understand that life doesn't always go as planned, and now I have a stronger faith that there's always a new day ahead. My name is Lisa and I have overcome homelessness through the transitional program that the Sierra House offered and for that I am thankful.

- *Lisa K.*

### **Story 2**

Sierra House has been beneficial to me in so many ways. I had been evicted from my apartment and I didn't know what my next move would be or where I was going. Thanks to the Healthy Families program, I was told about Sierra House. I called after hours and the social worker agreed to meet with me and process my initial intake, because she understood the seriousness of my situation. She truly wanted to help me and my daughter. A month later, I moved into Sierra House and instantly formed a bond with my new housemates. Even though I was already employed, Sierra House gave me many different job leads. They also provided me with many different classes, including an Empowerment class. The program is wonderful and I am thankful for them accepting me and my daughter and allowing us to be a part of their family. Sierra House assisted me in successfully moving on to the newest chapter in my life and I am forever grateful for that.

- *Shaquanna J.*

### **Story 3**

I am very appreciative of the help that Sierra House has given me. I was living at home with my mother, when we got into an argument and she kicked me out of the house. I called Sierra House and THAT SAME DAY they interviewed me and accepted me into the program. I moved in two

days later. The staff at Sierra House was very pleasant and always helpful. They helped me find jobs, set me up in a job training program and gave me advice on how to grow into a more mature and understanding individual. I had a job within a month of moving there and had many other prospects over the course of my stay. I also made some really good friends there, who I would like to keep in touch with. I am grateful that they accepted me so quickly. I do not know what I would have done without Sierra House.

- *Denise M.*