

First, I'd like to thank you all for allowing me to tell you my story.

When I was 19, I was on the college path for psychology. I thought I had everything set and the world was my oyster. However, that path quickly turned into an unexpected fork in the road.

I had 2 options – I could either continue going to school or be a mother. I chose motherhood and that was the best decision I have made.

At the time I found out I was pregnant, I had a stable management position at Borders, it paid well with benefits, so I assumed I was set. However, things don't always go as planned and Borders shut its' doors shortly after I had my son.

I began working 1 full time job and 2 part time jobs just to make ends meet. I was living paycheck to paycheck, with not a penny left over. I was too proud to admit that I needed help, regardless of how mentally and physically exhausted I was. I knew I wasn't being the best mom to Connor that I could be – I mean, who could be when you're stressing about choosing between toilet paper and healthy foods every week?

I applied for the Housing Choice Voucher program when Connor was about 1 year old. I waited another year and a half before I was selected for the Housing Choice Voucher program, and by this time I was worn out. I was still working 3 jobs 6 days a week and trying to find the time to go back to school. I felt like I missed out on a lot of my sons growing up and it broke my heart every day.

I was issued my voucher for the Housing Choice Voucher program when my son was 2 ½ years old and I cannot tell you how much relief was brought over me. I finally had the opportunity to save money for my sons' future. I had the chance to relax in the evenings with my son and on the weekends, we got to get outside and explore the beautiful trails we have around us – something we couldn't do before because I simply did not have the extra gas money to travel. I had the chance to take my son to California to see the beach and the zoo and most importantly, to see family - all without having to worry about how I'm going to pay for daycare when I get home. This program has helped to ensure that I would be able to put healthy meals on the table for my child and to show Connor what hard work and dedication will get you in the long run.

Now, 4 years later, I work for Nevada Rural Housing Authority. I come to work every day remembering the amazing opportunities this program has given to my little family. I'm grateful to have the perfect opportunity to help others get back on their feet as well. It's truly amazing when you are able to pay it forward.

Thank you.