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And Now It's Spring!

By © Lhtheaker

The grass is green across the hill,
 But yellow blooms the daffodil.
 It's sunshine on a little stalk,
 A friendly flower, I bet they talk...
 Of little kids, too long inside
 They burst outdoors to play
 and hide.
 Tracking mud and bringing
 bugs.
 Look, there's footprints on
 the rug!
 Tiny whirlwinds, these little
 tykes,
 They skin their knees while
 riding bikes.
 They rip and roar, they're
 running wild!
 What fun it is to be a child.
 It grows warmer every day.
 Shoo the children out to play!
 Pick the flowers, play in mud.
 Too much rain, here comes a
 flood!
 My snowy, winter days are
 gone.
 I mourn them, but I hear a
 song
 Of birds in trees; wind chimes
 ring.
 I guess it might as well be
 spring!

Why People Experience Homelessness

Some of the most common circumstances and life-altering events that can cause someone to become homeless include low-paying jobs, lay-offs, serious illness or accident, lack of income, loss of a loved one or divorce, lack of support networks (friends or family), evictions, foreclosures, poverty, natural disasters (hurricane, floods, etc.) and fires.

According to CNBC.com, at the beginning of 2022, as inflation continues, at least 64% of Americans are living from paycheck-to-paycheck. This means that most people in this country are struggling to pay their bills, and have little or no money left after spending their monthly income. With no savings as a buffer, if the average individual experiences the slightest life emergency costing even \$500, it can cause a serious set-back. Something as simple as an unexpected car repair or medical bill can quickly snowball into the lack of funds left to pay next month's rent, an eviction



notice, and the next thing you know you are sleeping in your car. And if you have children which are you going to choose, groceries or rent?

If you have never struggled financially, it would be easy to dismiss the idea, but we have to look at the facts. Inflation seems to have no end in sight. Pay rates are not increasing to sustain the increase of inflation, and homelessness continues to increase. It is very easy to judge someone's situation, but any number of circumstances could cause any one of us to experience homelessness. Be aware, be considerate, and be kind.

A Day in the Life of a Family

I wake before the sun to the sound of something moving around in the trees. The woods are so quiet at night, so still that every rustle, every screech, every sound is intensified. I am sure it is a bear, come to claim her home, to ransack camp, and eat all of our food. I sit straight up, put my hand over my mouth to help quiet my breathing, and the urge to scream. I sit motionless, hoping the children don't wake up. The sounds of breaking sticks and shuffling feet are inching closer to the tent. I'm convinced I can hear the breath of a large black bear on the tent wall. I carefully crawl over to the door and unzip just far enough for a peek. There, glistening in the moonlight, I see the definitive white stripe

of a skunk, then another, and over by the smoking fire pit, a



third. Still holding my silence, hoping not to startle one to spray, I realize we're going to be okay, this time. No bear.

I remember a time when I used to camp for recreation, but this was no vacation. Tent living in the forest makes every single chore more

difficult. I get up at the break of day and rush to start a fire and get breakfast going, with what little food may still be fresh in the cooler. The ice is dwindling and we need to get back to town today to restock. The kids get up and start to play, running around the campsite. They knock over the last two eggs and I cringe as I watch them splatter on the ground. Trying to create some normalcy in their little world, and not let them see how upset I am, I smile and say, "That's okay". We end up eating some dry cereal from the car for breakfast. The milk smelled funny, so I poured it out.

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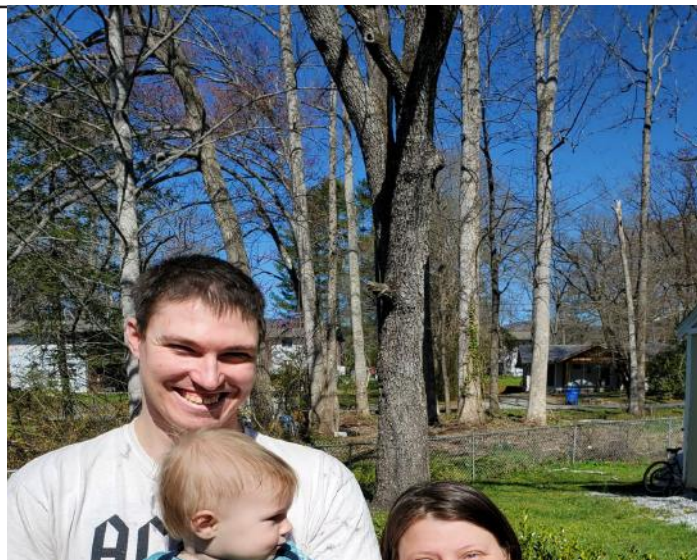
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After packing up anything "valuable" into the car and putting out the fire, we head to town to use the last of our money for more food and ice. It was so much easier when we had an apartment; when my husband was working. Though we didn't have much, I miss the ease of going to the kitchen and opening the refrigerator to grab food to cook. He hasn't been able to work since we lost our place. Afraid to leave us alone in the woods, he missed some work and lost his job. No one will hire him now. He has nowhere to shower and our clothes are all so dirty. People look at us like they're afraid to get close when we are in town for supplies. Without a mailing address, we lost our food stamps, so we have to rely on charities for everything.

Every day is tough, but I think bedtime is the hardest. Getting the kids to crawl into the cold, damp tent again, when they just want to go home and get into their beds. They don't understand. This is the longest camping trip ever, and they just want to go home. "When can we go home, mommy?" they ask as I beg them to go to sleep. They finally drift off and my eyes fill with tears that I just can't hold back any longer. It's cold, and the last thing I need is a wet pillow, but I can't keep from crying myself to sleep. "When will this end?" I wonder, as I finally drift in and out of restless sleep.

Guest Highlights Overcoming Obstacles

So many times in our lives we find that when we are in the middle of a storm, times are challenging. Can you imagine having to leave your home and having nowhere to go except an old camper that has no running water and an extension cord as your only electricity? This is not a make-believe story. It is a true story. To add to their crisis, they have an infant with special needs requiring a delicate surgery, yet doctors refuse as long as the family is without a safe place for the baby to recover. They come to The Haven seeking shelter and a room was coming available. The Haven was able to schedule an intake and get them right in. Shortly after, the baby was able to have his surgery and recover in a safe, clean, environment with the support of parents, staff, and collaborating agencies such as The Family Place, and Department of Social Services. This family was assisted by our Case Manager to apply for housing and mental health counseling was provided to the family to get them through the trauma they had experienced. Since the family was at the Haven Family House and agreed to ongoing case management, they received a preference at the Housing Authority, as well as a second preference for having stable employment. This moved them up



the list rather quickly and in February this family was housed! Thrive, another collaborating agency, was able to assist with deposits through the Back at Home program and provide them with necessary household furnishings. Housing is a community effort and when we all work together the results are amazing! Chase, Jen and Cole (pictured above) are so grateful to all the agencies that partnered in getting them housed!



Playground Fundraising

In early fall of 2021 we began fundraising for a new playground for our children at the Haven Family House. We are about one third of the way to reaching our financial goal! We need our partners now more than ever to turn this dream into a reality for the children of our guests at the Haven Family House. If you have not sent a monetary donation in a while please consider giving for this cause. It's spring and our kids are ready to get outside and play!

From the Director's Desk

As a new year has started and flowers are blooming, I feel like The Haven is finally in full bloom. With the garden freshly planted and the harvest to come in throughout the summer and fall, so do our efforts from working with people. For this quarter, The Haven has provided shelter for 31 people including 11 children under the age of 18. We have been busy. Two families from the Haven Family House have been housed. Both with infants that otherwise would

have been in places not meant for habitation. Another family from the Haven Family House left for a housing opportunity with relatives. From the Haven Thomas House, 1 person was moved into a long-term rental and a family expecting a baby was transferred to the Haven Family House when the baby arrived early. As I look back on all that's happened since January, I see progress and it thrills me to see the difference we are making in people's lives.

It is not an easy task and there are days more difficult than others, but when you look at the big picture, it all becomes perfectly clear. We are here to assist people to their next destination the best we can. As long as we keep that in mind all of the challenges seem to dissipate and progress becomes evident. Thank you for all your support through this as we celebrate 11 years of doing just that! We truly could not do it without the support of our incredible community.

Thank you!

Did you know that practicing gratitude can actually boost your immune system, and has been shown to contribute to a more positive overall sense of well-being?! This is according to healthline.com

Spring has sprung, and our hearts leap with joy, overwhelmed with gratitude. Did you know that over 50% of our donations are from private donors like you!

We also give much thanks to the many grants that fund our day to day operations and programs. St. Philips Episcopal Church, Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Emergency Solutions Grant, Audrey Love Foundation, Community Foundation of WNC, Rotary Club, Lake Toxaway Charities, and Transylvania County, and Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church.



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