Ylexeus’ Story

August 6, 2017 was the day my life changed for my son and I. We escaped from a terrible place in Mexico on a journey to Vermont. I came with the expectation to get some help and found a new stable place to call home.

I had just given birth to my son in Texas and was in a terrible situation that gave me no other choice but to leave. I spoke with my Grandma, Linda and got on a greyhound with my son, not yet two months old. My Grandma spoke to Kate and Pete from John Graham Shelter. Packing a small duffle bag of snacks, a painting and couple outfits for my newborn I got on a greyhound bus and came to Vermont. I was terrified of losing my son. I couldn’t sleep. I had to use the restroom with one hand while holding my son. Three long sleepless days and I arrived to Burlington Airport/Greyhound Station. Got in a cab and got to Middlebury where my grandmother, Linda, resided. I arrived to my grandmother’s apartment and later that night I met a special person named Kate that welcomed me with genuine kindness and guided me into the future I am striving for today.

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Poverty and Community: A Reflection
By Quinn Salinder

I have served as an AmeriCorps member at the Shelter since January last year. It has been a rich and challenging period of my life that has changed the way I think about Vermont, the state I have lived in my entire life; about poverty, and how it’s never effective to talk about it simply as a lack of income; about how I communicate with others; and about countless other aspects of being a human being in our society that I believe I will continue to reflect upon well into the future.

I wasn’t interested in a career in social work when I began, and I am headed down a different path going forward, yet this is an experience that I have never wished I could trade for another. Being part of the shelter, sharing space and overcoming challenges with the people who serve and are served, has granted me a sense of the community that I am a part of that, to me, is unique and invaluable. In August I will begin an internship in the housing department of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, where I aspire to learn about and address community, poverty, and equity from a different vantage. Just as this move follows from what I have learned, I intend to let the perspectives that I have been introduced to while serving at the shelter inform all that I do in the future.

I want to thank all the staff members who were such a crucial part of my experience; their patience and support showed me how I too can be patient and supportive, and that there is nothing mystical about doing so. Much of the same can be said about all the residents and community members who have come into the shelter and needed, more than almost anything else, somebody to listen to them. Thank you to everyone who has given me the opportunity to help and to learn; it has been a greater gift than I could have imagined.
Summertime at John Graham

This year our garden has gotten off to a slow start with all the rain, but it has not dampened the enthusiasm of residents and staff. Every time we go to plant, the rain begins. One young woman planted peppers and another planted several different flowers.

We have plenty of seeds thanks to the High Mowing Seed Company, a Vermont seed outlet that donated packets of seeds. Green Haven Gardens of New Haven also donated gorgeous plant seedlings. We are grateful.

We have already had a wonderful salad made from the greens harvested by one of our gardeners. We will be having these throughout the season. Once we get the rest of the garden seeded and seedlings planted, we will look forward to many meals of fresh produce.

Families, especially children, are already enjoying the John Graham pool pass and local summer programs while parents are working. It’s shaping up to be a good season.

With Special Thanks To:

Middlebury Rotary Club
Vermont Women’s Fund
Vergennes Shaws
UU Youth Group
Vergennes Union High School Seniors
The Lions Club
Key Bank Employees
St. Peter’s Church
Vergennes Congregational Church

North Ferrisburgh United
Methodist Church
Corona SDA Couples Retreat of the Corona SDA Church
St Stephen’s Outreach Committee
Vermont Law School Law Clinic
Century 21 Vergennes Office
Green Haven
Honeymoon Kitchen
(Ylexus’ Story, cont.)

August 11, 2017, I moved into John Graham Shelter and met Pete and the rest of their staff. Scared, worried but determined to create a better life for my family I began this amazing journey. With the help of their staff I managed to get all my priorities in order. They connected me to the many resources they had to offer such as Economic Services. Another being the Addison County Parent Child Center where I currently still attend, which provided me with an opportunity to get my GED. They connected me with a woman named Clara Carroll, an Outreach Worker from there. Clara came to the shelter and met me and explained to me about their program, stating that their services could provide me with Child Care as I worked on getting my GED and preparing for my future.

At first I was intrigued, but undecided, so it took many tries of convincing before I decided to check it out. I agreed and went one afternoon to meet my son’s childcare room and realized I liked it. So I gave it a try and the very next morning began attending there. While going there I learned it would take me the same amount of time to get my GED as it would my High School Diploma. So I decided to make a plan and get my diploma and work on my career. Soon after becoming a participant I began working on my CDA (Child Development Associates) to work on getting one step closer to working in childcare and hopes of one day to open my own daycare.

“We escaped from a terrible place in Mexico on a journey to Vermont. I came to get some help and found a new stable place to call home.”

In October I moved in with my Grandma to an apartment owned by John Graham. Fast forwarding to June 2019, two long years of hard work, I am now a high school graduate. I am still in the process of completing my CDA, taking a Fundamentals class in the Fall. This all wouldn’t have been possible if it hadn’t of been for all the love and support from John Graham Shelter. I am beyond grateful with all of their connections they have with Addison County.