Tara has been a resident of Westchester County her entire life . . . She never imagined that one day she would become homeless.

Born and raised in White Plains, Tara was a junior in college when an unexpected family emergency forced her to take a leave of absence.

Her mother had fallen and broken her hip and Tara needed to act as her caretaker during a long recovery period. Tara never returned to complete her college degree however she later registered at Manhattanville College and became a paralegal, a profession she practiced for over 20 years.

Just as things seemed to be turning around, Tara was diagnosed with cancer. She had two major surgeries that ultimately affected her ability to walk and she had to find a new apartment with fewer stairs and more handicapped accessible features. The search was difficult but there was a silver-lining; after months of chemotherapy and radiation, Tara’s cancer was in finally in remission.

Though her health was improving, she was still not strong enough to return to work. Bills and rent continued to pile up. Although she was able to secure some support from Social Security and Disability, it was not enough to cover all of her expenses.

Eventually, Tara found herself homeless.

With nowhere else to turn, Tara entered the Volunteers of America emergency shelter. From there, she was transferred to Samaritan House, Lifting Up Westchester’s women’s shelter. During her stay there, Tara’s Case Manager Denise worked to find housing that was both affordable and could accommodate her health needs.

“I really love my case worker, Denise – she was the first person in a long time since I had become homeless that treated me with respect, dignity and was always listening and trying to help me get back on track.”

Just as she settled into her new apartment, Tara learned that her cancer had spread. She became very ill quickly. Extended stays in the hospital became routine and Tara yearned to return to the comforts of her own home.
Denise made her wish a reality by arranging visits from a Home Health Aide from our Neighbors Home Care Services Program. Tara’s aide helps her remember all of her appointments and Tara cannot imagine life without her.

“I knew I was ill but all I wanted to do was come home from the hospital... Lifting Up Westchester made it possible... Lifting Up Westchester has saved my life.”