

## A Laid Off Wisconsin Woman Finds Hope, Direction in HPRP

### Positive Stories / Lessons Learned from HPRP: *Individual Success Story*

HPRP Grantee:	State of Wisconsin
CoC Name and Number:	WI-500 – Wisconsin Balance of State CoC

### Latest CoC Point-in-Time Count:

Total persons in ES:	1,488	Total persons in TH:	1,654
Total persons in Safe Haven:	7	Total unsheltered persons:	251
Total persons, sheltered and unsheltered:	3,400		

Sheri\* knew she wasn't the only one who lost her job in 2008, but being laid off made her feel more vulnerable than she wanted to admit. Neither her 15 years of experience nor her bachelor's degree protected her marketing career as she had expected. She resisted collecting unemployment because she knew her savings and her husband's income would support them until she found another job, but her bank account continued to shrink and arguments about money became more frequent.

Two years later, Sheri entered HPRP. She had acquired what felt like a mountain of medical debt since COBRA ran out, as well as unmet mental health needs. She was two months' behind in her rent and faced eviction in five days. She owed her utility companies \$500 and her friend another \$200 for helping her meet minimum payments.

She was solely responsible for these bills; her husband moved out during their divorce proceedings. Her case manager recognized the isolation Sheri felt and the blow to her confidence that being jobless and partner-less inflicted upon her. HPRP became a bridge to both financial and emotional support systems.

While she received rental assistance to maintain her apartment, she signed up for food stamps, energy assistance, and unemployment to keep her costs low. Her case manager gave her vouchers for use at the local farmer's market and, when the holidays came, an enormous Thanksgiving basket. Volunteers dropped off weekly groceries and Sheri shyly met the people around her who cared enough to help.

For eight months, Sheri's case manager was her cheerleader. She encouraged her in her job search, told her to hang on when all she could find were part-time jobs, got her free bus passes to travel to those jobs, and resolutely insisted that Sheri follow a budget. Budgeting turned out to be the sort of structured, long-term project that helped assuage Sheri's fears of the future and paying down her bills, though incrementally, raised her confidence. Sheri exited HPRP the week that she quit her two part-time jobs and accepted a full-time marketing position in Madison. She moved out of the apartment she had shared with her husband and into a new unit closer to work.

Through HPRP, Sheri learned how to prioritize housing costs and budget to pay down debt. She left the program with skills that will help her maintain future housing. But, if she couldn't, she also learned there are people in her community who will give their time and money to those in need. Sheri entered HPRP ashamed of her loneliness and financial need, but she left with a burgeoning support network and a commitment to grow relationships with those she could count on - and with those who might need her in the future.

*\*Names have been changed for confidentiality.*

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