

Stories of Hope

“Joe and Maria – A New Beginning”

Kim, the case worker at the Shelter who works with families, enthusiastically related the story of Joe and Maria—“When I met Joe, I sensed it would be different story. He came here by himself initially because he couldn’t stay with his expended family. He arrived with no car, which wasn’t unusual and nor was it unusual that he wanted to bring his family here.” But, as he wanted to bring his family here--his wife Maria, and his two teenage girls Rose and Jacinda— Kim needed to be sure Joe knew the girls had to go to school. As the girls and Maria were from a non-English speaking background, Kim was worried about how they might integrate. She asked Joe whether he had any of the records from the girls previous schools. Homeless people usually don’t have full sets of medical, dental and education record with them. Kim was delighted when Joe said he had all of the report cards for both Rose and Jacinda. Joe handled the documents carefully and lovingly as he handed them to Kim. Both girls were straight “A” students. Kim sparkled “These report cards were treasures for Joe.” This story was going to be different.

When the girls and Maria came to the Shelter, Kim helped place the girls in a local high school. She assisted Joe in finding another job and a car. She connected Maria with English classes. As Kim worked with the family, she realized that they had goals. Joe told her “It is not about me— it is about getting a better life for my children.”

The girls maintained their straight A average and eventually Kim, in conjunction with another caseworker, Anne, located subsidized housing for the family. Kim connected the family with community services such as LEAVEN, and FISC—so that the family could best manage their money after they left the Shelter. When they did leave, their gratitude to the Shelter and Staff was evident, not only by what they said, but by what they did. Every week for at least a year, the family donated a bag of groceries. “Sometimes it was only a gallon of milk and box of spaghetti, but it was always something.” Kim smiled as she concluded “they carved a very nice stable life for themselves here in Appleton.”