

Overcoming homelessness and employment challenges

BriGette: A typical day was me working two jobs, going to school and having someone keep my daughter at night because I wanted her to go to school but I didn't want her to not see me, so I would work at night and have someone keep her so that when she'd get up I'd take her to school and do all those things and then I would go to school and then I would work, and then I would go pick her up and then I'd take her somewhere so she would get sleep with the sitter and then I'd go back to work at night, so that's pretty much how it went for about a three or four-year period while I was trying to go to school and trying to get a better job.

After 9/11 I was working for a bank and they started laying folk off and I was part of that process. I got another job, it was just starting again, just getting the money working, and then I got in a really bad car accident, and then I had to come off from work, so I would get started and get some good momentum going and then something would happen.

2003 was the first time I would meet the definition of homelessness currently. There was a lot of couch surfing, figuring things out, staying with friends, that kind of thing right after I got out, but at that time we didn't consider that homelessness? We just kind of considered it transitioning. You would just say "Oh, you know, I'm in transition." The second time that I was homeless was in 2005, then again in 2009, so I just kept hitting bumps, and like I said I'd get some momentum and then another bump and then it's, like, "Ugh, I've got to work it out and—", I'm not going to give up. That's not going to happen, but it's very difficult. It can be very difficult.

We were in a program, actually it's called Home Stretch, the second time, and that program just basically was for middle income families who are working and they helped me through that program and it was pretty good, so now I'm in the HUD-VASH program. It's actually just community apartments that accept the VASH voucher, and that's the great thing about the program. It's not one building or one facility or anything, anyone who will accept it you can just pretty much go to them and say "Here, I've got it," and they coordinate through the HUD program and you don't have to do anything but pay your rent, and then HUD pays the other portion and it works out, and as you graduate—I say graduate but as you have more income or things get better your rent does go up, but it does offer you the opportunity to transition from renting to home ownership.



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