



Couleecap

your local community *action* program

relatively stable life into a crisis that threatened to spin out into a much larger and longer-term problem.

Cindy had never relied on any government or other agency help before. She graduated from Tomah High School and went to a technical college in La Crosse while she raised her two daughters. She lived with her parents for a few months and then she remembered hearing from several people with good experiences with Couleecap, and that the organization had all kinds of ways to help people, so she did some checking.

What she found was an organization designed to help people in just her kind of situation. Cindy wasn't sure what kind of help she would find, but she figured she would ask. She got more than she expected.

Couleecap's Homeless Prevention program gave her a list of people who had rentals and who had worked with the agency in the past. Finding a place was streamlined. Couleecap also provided financial help with the first couple months of rent once Rockette secured a place. And finally, Couleecap's People Helping People fund was able to help her by paying a substantial portion of the heating bill as well.

Cindy is now back on track.

She and her daughter are established in their new place, and Cindy can focus again on her work and on other important things, like getting her daughter to summer camp. Cindy was thrilled with the support she received.

"It couldn't have come at a better time," she says. "It's great."

Cindy says that everyone she dealt with from Couleecap was really easy and respectful.

"They're awesome," she says. "A lot of people have the impression that if you have to ask for help, there's something really wrong with you."

Couleecap doesn't make you feel like a failure, like you're worthless. They just help you.

Cindy is thankful for that kind of attitude from the people she worked with at Couleecap. She wants everyone to know about the programs that Couleecap offers.

"Don't be afraid to ask for help," she says.

"Couleecap doesn't make you feel like a failure, like you're worthless. They just help you."

Real stories.

Cindy Rockette grew up in Tomah, Wisconsin, knowing the ways of the cranberry marshes, the ever-present military personnel, the intimacies of small town life.

She has always worked for a living, making sure that the payment on her vehicle is up-to-date and that her rent is current. She takes care of her one daughter still at home, and keeps up with her older daughter. She volunteers with the Friends of Veterans, which built five homes in Tomah for vets last year. Cindy lives close to the financial edge, but she makes it work.

That is, it worked until something out of her control went wrong. One cold January day in 2011, Cindy got a call at work. A friend had stopped by Cindy's rental home to check on a new puppy and the carbon monoxide alarm was going off. The puppy was removed, the furnace-repair guy called, and the result: the furnace was malfunctioning and needed to be shut down immediately. It couldn't be fixed and it needed to be replaced. In some ways, this was a lucky catch. The repairman said that Cindy and her 15-year-old daughter were likely being slowly poisoned by carbon monoxide.

"He said we were lucky to be alive," Cindy says.

Suddenly, the weeks of headaches made more sense. Okay, Cindy thought, we'll just go stay with my parents (who also live in Tomah) until the landlord replaces the furnace. After all, Cindy had submitted an offer to buy the home, and the owner had accepted the offer, so figuring out the furnace should be a small thing.

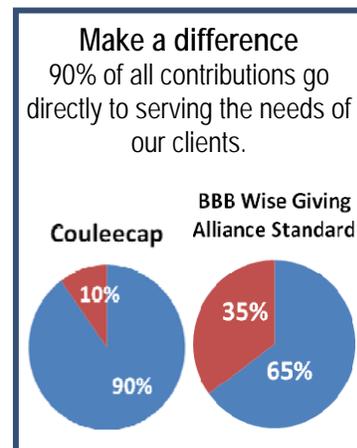
"He said we were lucky to be alive."

But sometimes, a small thing can rock a world to the point of breaking.

In Cindy's case, the malfunctioning furnace had left her with a huge heating bill for the month of January. The landlord also decided that Cindy was responsible for the full cost of a new furnace. Cindy said that the price of the new furnace should be taken off the price of the house.

The two sides couldn't come to an agreement, and ultimately, the landlord not only ripped up the accepted offer, but said Cindy and her daughter had to leave the home for good. He gave them just enough time in their home to pack their belongings. Suddenly Cindy was essentially homeless: living with her parents, responsible for a large heating bill. Not only was that stark reality something to deal with, but her dream of owning her first home was dashed.

Practically speaking, there was no way that Cindy was going to be able to secure a new place, and pay the heating bill, all the while keeping up with her other expenses. ***It took just one emergency to change her***



Questions?
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