

I continue to be amazed each day when I come to work at Colorado Homeless Families by the resilience, hard work, and determination of the families in our program to improve their lives. One young man I had the privilege of getting to know is Ryan. He is an example of the hope and determination of the youth we work with at Colorado Homeless Families that are determined to improve their lives and make a positive contribution to society.

We celebrated Ryan's high school graduation as well as his "full ride" scholarship from the Daniel's Fund, which will cover all of his college costs for four full years. What I recall most about the celebration we had for Ryan was how truly happy he was and how his face was beaming with excitement.

Two years ago when Ryan and his mom, Mary, came to CHF their smiles were few and far between. Mary had recently gone through a very long, ugly divorce after her husband's mental breakdown. Now single with Ryan and two older boys, she struggled with very low self-esteem, had no support system and was barely able to make ends meet to support herself and the boys. Mary had just gotten settled into CHF when a tragic ski accident suddenly took her middle son's life. The shock and disbelief had Mary and her two boys reeling with grief and sadness. The incredible loss they felt was overwhelming.

At CHF families are provided with housing and supportive services of case management, counseling, educational seminar and support group meetings as well as a food/clothing/furniture bank. It is those services that allowed Mary and her sons to heal. Mary worked intensely with her case manager and the counselor to build up her self-esteem and overcome her grief. Her case manager was also able to help her identify and train for a better job that would allow her to earn enough money to support herself and Ryan on her own.

Ryan also received some grief counseling, but most importantly he began to focus on school. He saw excelling at school was a way that he could improve his life and help his mother. He saw how much his mother was suffering and wanted to help her. When I first met Ryan I was so impressed by how focused he was. He was very passionate about the band he was in and they would meet 3 times a week to practice. After each practice his friends would stay around after and hang out. They told him he should stay too, that his homework and studies could wait. Ryan would tell them that his studies couldn't wait. Not only did he do all of his work for school, but he also worked a part time job to help make ends meet.

This past month, Ryan and his mother graduated from CHF to self-sufficiency. Mary now has a job that allows her to pay the rent on her apartment each month and support herself. Ryan started college this fall and has been working hard at his studies.

"Dear Connie, I am so very, very grateful that I landed at Colorado Homeless Families when I did! I know for certain that God placed me in your care. I struggled with life events from the first day I moved in, as you know. I cannot express in words how very thankful I am that you and your staff were there as my safety net. I knew I had to fight hard to keep my head above water, but the relief to all the stress was I knew there was someone who actually cared if I could not pay my rent or if

there was difficulty trying to navigate through my struggles. You actually listened and cared! Thank you just doesn't seem to be enough! I will always be so very grateful to you, your staff and your wonderful organization! You have made a difference in the kind of person I have become and my sons as well! I became an even stronger woman while living at CHF and I know it was only possible because I knew someone actually cared if I sank or swam!! You and your organization made a difference in my life and will be in my heart until this journey is complete! Congratulations and job well done, with another success story! With all my gratitude and LOVE, Mary."

Your support helps make it possible for Colorado Homeless Families to help people like Mary and Ryan get their lives back on track. CHF offers job training, food, shelter, support services, counseling, and educational programming to homeless children and families in our community. Your generous gift will help support the families at CHF as they work to overcome the challenges in their lives to become self-sufficient and productive members of society.

Please know that even the smallest gift can help the children and families at Colorado Homeless Families. The families at CHF are so grateful for your support.