



PROFILES OF HOPE: Meet Megan, an IOH graduate:

My name is Megan and I'd like to tell you about a magical place called Interfaith Outreach Home. My children and I were blessed to live there, and this is our story.

In 2007, I moved my kids from Florida after separating from my husband. I was a stay-at-home mom with a 2 and 3 year old. My ex moved to India, leaving me with two babies and no money. I lost our apartment and moved in with my sister/best friend for the first of three times. It was very hard for a long time. It put so much strain on all of us. I didn't make enough money to support my family but I couldn't leech off my loved ones. Eventually, the three of us slept in our car in dark church parking lots. I told the kids, "It's an adventure!", but I was broken. I heard about IOH from a coworker and applied. I cried when we were accepted. The apartment was furnished and so welcoming. When picking up the kids that day, I told them, "I have the awesome-est news!" They replied, "Mama, awesome-est isn't a word." And I said, "It is today!" We had a safe place to live and an opportunity to make our lives better. That was the "awesome-est".

I've grown up a lot over the past three years. You can't survive what I have and remain closed-minded and shut down. I've learned to be patient with myself and the universe. We lived at IOH for two years and saved more than the required \$500 most months. It was the first time I had a savings account in years. Every holiday the kids would get something with their names on it. It lifted my spirits to see their joy as they said, "They even spelled our names right!"

Everyone I met at IOH blew me away. The life skills leaders were passionate and non-judgmental, and often said they were changed by hearing the resident's stories. Living at IOH was like a big family, our own community. We looked out for each other.

I am now a supervisor at both Lane Bryant and Sherwin Williams. I make enough so that I alone can support my son and daughter for the first time in their lives. My boyfriend reminded me recently that I too deserve to be happy. I told him, "My kids sleep in their own beds, in their own home, and eat food that I provide. To me, that is happiness."

I'm exhausted, but my kids (now 11 and nearly 13) are safe and in a good school. They have all they need, and some things they want. They see how hard I'm working and know I can provide for them. All of us needed to know I could do it. My kids and my sister are proud of me, which is gratifying and empowering. I would not be where I am today if it weren't for Deborah and IOH. I'll always be grateful.