One Less Thing to Worry About

When Ashleigh was 18, she moved from Ohio to Phoenix with her mother, hoping the change would bring a fresh start. Instead, she found herself homeless in a city she barely knew.

After an argument with her mother that Ashleigh believed had been resolved, she returned home from work one day to find her belongings on the porch. The police told her she had to leave, and suddenly, she had nowhere to go.

Ashleigh turned to CASS, a Phoenix shelter, and spent the following years moving in and out of its shelter program. When she wasn't able to stay in the program, she slept outside in a tent.

But when Ashleigh reflects on those years, she remembers more than the uncertainty of not having a place to call home. She remembers the people she met.

She recalls meeting artists, writers, builders, and people with all kinds of talents and experiences who were facing circumstances similar to her own. She wants others to understand that the people living in tents outside the shelter are valuable human beings, each with their own skills, stories, and potential.

After several years, Ashleigh became a mother to her daughter, Ariya. She describes Ariya as the reason behind everything she does today, a motivation that has shaped how she approaches her future.

For a time, Ashleigh and Ariya lived together in a tent. Eventually, Ashleigh found a job that paid enough for her to afford an apartment, allowing them to move into housing of their own.

But an unexpected payroll mix-up left Ashleigh with only half of her paycheck for the month. Unable to keep up with rent, she fell behind and ultimately lost her housing. She and Ariya are now staying in a shelter program while Ashleigh works toward finding a permanent home for their family.

Ashleigh has since found a new job with better hours and continues taking steps toward greater stability. Along the way, she has also connected with TCAA's food pantry.

For Ashleigh, access to groceries makes a meaningful difference. With food available for her and Ariya, she has one less essential expense to worry about while she works to get back into permanent housing. She shared that without the food pantry, she would be struggling much more.

That breathing room matters. When you're working to secure housing, maintain

employment, and care for a young child, having help meeting an everyday need can make the road ahead feel more manageable.

Ashleigh and Ariya are still working toward their next chapter. Ashleigh continues to show up for her daughter and pursue opportunities to build a more stable future for them both. Ariya, with her sweet and energetic personality, brings her own light to their story.

Their experience is a reminder that homelessness does not define a person. Behind every housing crisis is a person with a history, relationships, talents, and hopes for what comes next. And while the path to stability is not always straightforward, access to practical support can help make that path a little easier to navigate.

Through its food pantry, TCAA helps community members like Ashleigh meet an immediate need while they work toward longer-term goals. Sometimes, putting food on the table means one less thing to worry about, and a little more room to focus on what comes next.