

United Way of Monroe County

Success Stories

Please note that the names of the actual participants have been changed to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

- **Susan's Story: A Journey Towards Self-Sufficiency** – Susan entered the Salvation Army's Shelter program after being referred by the Pocono Medical Center. She had been staying with relatives who were no longer willing to keep her and her two-year child in their home. When she entered the program she was pregnant with twins that were due four months. The father of the children was not able to help her situation due to her pregnancy. Employment was not an option. A caseworker helped her to explore the options that were available to her, including low-income public housing and transitional housing. She applied and was accepted into PATH's Transitional Housing program, funded by United Way. While in the program, she gave birth to her twins, entered an employment training program and is now living independently along while continuing her training and raising her family. Without funding from the United Way of Monroe County, PATH would not have been able to provide this family with safe shelter and time to allow Susan to begin her journey toward self-sufficiency.
- **Dewey's Story: A Comfortable Transition** – Dewey, a 69-year-old consumer at Burnley Workshop, has been in the Senior Program, funded by United Way, since its inception three years ago. When he first attended the Workshop he did not communicate with others at all. He says, "Now I like to talk to people". He especially enjoys the visits to the Chestnuthill Senior Center for the food, exercises, games and prizes. When he retires, he is looking forward to continuing the activities that he has been introduced to through the Senior Program.
- **Russell's Story: A Great Place To Work** – Russell is 58 years old. He says that: "Burnley Workshop and the Senior Program is like my family." He states that he now feels more comfortable around people and is a better worker because of his participation in the activities. The Senior Program is a United Way funded program.
- **Marion's Story: Staying Active And Enjoying Life** – Marion likes the senior activities such as walking and bowling because it helps her to keep down her weight. She also enjoyed a visit from ESU art students who helped the seniors make planters. "That was a wonderful experience," she said. Marion appreciates the opportunity to have some time to relax and be away from her work. At 71, she is not interested in retiring any time soon but feels that the Senior Program, funded by United Way, has been good for her.
- **Emily's Story: Vision Loss Doesn't Mean A Loss of Independence** – Emily is an 84 year old with Macular degeneration. She has one daughter who lives in the New York area and visits mom about once a month. Emily exists on her Social Security. Emily had an almost impossible time getting to essential appointments. She has used Share-a-Ride, but her extremely poor vision makes it difficult to navigate on her own. United Way funding allows VIABL to help Emily in many ways. Our "escort driver takes Emily to two doctor's appointments a month, grocery shopping, and to the drug store. A VIABL caseworker visits Emily each month to read her mail and assist with paperwork. We have also provided visual aids to Emily to keep her safe in her kitchen, despite her vision loss. Emily may need to enter a Nursing Home should her health deteriorates, but with VIABL's assistance, she is doing fine at remaining independent in her own home.

- **Irene's Story: A Helping Hand In The Darkness** – Irene is a 60 year old woman from Stroudsburg who recently became a client of Visual Impairment and Blindness Services when she lost her eyesight. She has detached retinas due to meningitis. She says the most upsetting thing to her is to no longer be able to see the faces of her grandchildren. In Irene's own words: "I have only recently lost my eye sight eight months ago and didn't know how I was going to deal with this "nightmare of darkness." As I struggled along, I received a letter from VIABL Services inviting me to a Support Group meeting. I was reluctant to attend this type of meeting with strangers, but VIABL provided "escorted" transportation to and from the meeting so I went. And there I met many other people that have similar problems with their eyesight and most importantly, I met Cindy Starner. Her compassion and caring took away my fear. Cindy gave us hope and new ways to do things. Cindy and the people at VIABL have given all of us in Support the confidence and the visual tools to deal with our lives as they are now. Needless to say, I have become a client of the agency. With funding from United Way, VIABL is helping people to cope and live with our disabilities, rather than to become overwhelmed by them."
- **Andrew's Story: Nourishment For A Man In Need** – Andrew is a mentally disabled man who spent much of his life under the care of the State. He now lives on his own but has very limited income which barely covers his rent. He receives a nutritious meal from the Feeding program five days a week. Without funding from United Way of Monroe County we would not be able to provide a hot nutritious meal to Andrew and the many other people who rely on us to help them supplement their food dollars.
- **Ann and Harold's Story: Keeping Out The Cold** – Ann and Harold are an elderly couple whose only income is Social Security. They rent their home and heat with propane. The home is not well maintained and poorly insulated. The rental payment is almost one half of their income. While they are eligible for and use the LIHEAP program cold weather hit before that program opened. Because of funding from United Way of Monroe County the Energy Assistance program was able to provide this family with a minimum fill of propane that helped them maintain their heat until other help was available to them.
- **Help for Child Born Prematurely:** Mindy, a local retail employee, and her husband were adopting their second child, a child that was born prematurely weighing only one pound at birth. The baby girl, when she was finally came home after 4 months in the hospital, weighed approximately the weight of a healthy newborn. The working family still needs specialized equipment and skilled nursing support to help the baby continue its slow progress. Visiting Nurse Association/Hospice of Monroe County (VNA) receives United Way funding for its HomeCare program, the program that helped Melissa baby, now a healthy and active 4 year old. Melissa older child, a son, has also benefited from the equine therapy program at Equi-librium.
- **Building Confidence within Our Youth:** Mary, a 2003 Pocono Mountain School District graduate, is now employed in a local agency serving children with learning and physical disabilities. When she first came to Youth Employment Services, she was a severely shy 14-year-old teen that rarely talked due to her own learning disability. Paired with other teens without disability but needing job experience, she began to feel more at ease and build self-esteem. Soon Mary was placed in employment on her own where she began working with younger children with disabilities, and helping them to grow. She is now a self-sustaining working member of our community.

- **Life-Giving Blood:** As a retired, 35 year, volunteer from the American Red Cross Blood Program, volunteering after I retired from the Navy, I had thanked many Monroe County donors for years at Community Blood Drives, but never dreamed I would now be thanking them in a different way, for my life. I was bleeding internally, source unknown, and used over 12 units of blood at Pocono Medical Center. I am very grateful to the American Red Cross of Monroe County for providing the Blood Collection Program. They help to insure that blood is on the shelf ready and waiting when the need for blood occurs, be it an emergency, as was the case in my situation or for elective surgery or cancer treatments. God Bless the American Red Cross of Monroe County.

Sincerely, A RN Retired Lt. Commander, US Navy

- **Helping Families of Military Personnel:** I would like to share my first opportunity to call on our local Red Cross of Monroe County for help. August 3, 2003, my father passed away. My son, Christopher, had just been deployed with the U.S. Air Force to a tiny island in the middle of the Indian Ocean halfway around the world. We were unable to inform him of the loss of his grandfather due to the fact that he had just arrived there with no cell phone or computer access yet. My wife Linda thought to call our local chapter of the American Red Cross to try to locate Chris to have him call. After giving Marion at the Red Cross as much information as we could, we received a call from our son within hours. The Red Cross came through for us when we really needed help. THANK YOU RED CROSS!

A Couple

East Stroudsburg, Pa

- **In Times of Emergency** - I have dealt with the Red Cross many times before in the course of my job and have always found them to be very caring and helpful to families facing emergencies. I never thought that I would need their services. On January 13th, 2003 my family and I lost our home and all our possessions to a fire. Within an hour of calling 911, Bob Guise from the Salvation Army, came over to my husband and I and told us he had talked to the Red Cross. He told us to call them as soon as we could as they were going to get us a "Place to stay tonight". When we contacted them they not only gave us a place to stay for that night but also for the next six nights along with meals for all 5 of us. The next morning we were instructed to come to their office on Park Ave. upon arriving they showed such amazing concern for my family. They gave us vouchers to get clothing. They gave us packages for all 3 of my children. In these packages were some personal hygiene products along with some toys. These packages put a big smile on the kid's faces. They also gave them some stuffed animals and blankets when we gave this to my youngest she started to cry saying now she has a stuffed animal again to sleep with because she lost her favorite one. When you are facing such an emergency "You don't know which end is up and what way to turn". It was a big relief to have someone who can help by taking some of the stress off you by taking charge and putting a roof over your head. This gives you time to figure out what to do next. They not only gave us physical support but they followed up with advice and emotional support. We can never say Thank You enough to such a dedicated and caring staff. Everyone in this organization deserves a big Thank You not only from my family but also from the community as they do a job that is very difficult to do.