

## Safelight Success Stories

### **“Amy”**

At 27, Amy entered shelter directly from prison, which had resulted from her drug abuse. She had an extensive history of having been abused as a child and had experienced domestic violence as an adult. In the three months she was in shelter, Amy received intensive counseling, case management and support group services.

Safelight also assisted Amy with court services, court accompaniment and support, and coordinated with the Department of Social Services assisting her in regaining custody of her child. She continues with Parkway for substance abuse support and says that she probably would not have persevered without the encouragement of her Safelight case manager. She has now been drug-free for over a year.

Amy has lived in one of Safelight’s transitional housing apartments but now has obtained her own safe independent housing. As a result of Safelight’s community connections, Amy was hired by McDonald’s and is in their management training program. She now feels like she is on her way to becoming a healthy and productive member of the community.

### **“Judy”**

Judy first came to Safelight’s shelter several years ago at the recommendation of the Department of Social Services and law enforcement. She had become pregnant with her first child at age sixteen, and now in her early thirties, had spent her life in abusive relationships. She entered shelter with a four-year-old son and a baby on the way. Judy left everything she owned with her abusive partner, and was literally starting over.

Judy now found herself with no job, car, or daycare, and on Work First. After spending time in shelter, she was approved for Safelight’s Transitional Housing. “It was such a blessing to have a home to bring the new baby,” Jody said with tears in her eyes. “I loved my new apartment, and the other residents and I were there to help each other.” Judy then qualified for Section 8 housing and was able to move into permanent independent housing.

She continues to participate in Safelight’s support groups and counseling. “I have learned so much about the warning signs of abuse, and about how to become empowered. For the first time, I have the self-esteem to know I can do things by myself.” With the guidance of case management, many of Judy’s obstacles and barriers have been overcome.

Judy’s children are now in school and Head Start, and she relies on Safelight’s drop-in daycare when school is closed. Judy joined Safelight’s job training program at the Dandelion Eatery; the first job she had had in four years. “I have gained so much knowledge from Dandelion staff and the Blue Ridge College Program-- both culinary skills and working in the restaurant. She now works at Safelight’s drop-in day care program.

“I just feel so thankful and blessed.” Judy says. “I have been helped by so many people. I hope someday I will be able to give back to the community.”

### “Lily”

Lily, a bright and beautiful 19-year-old single mother entered sheltered with her infant daughter. She had suffered significant trauma as a child and was now living with a family member. The conditions in the home and the verbal abuse that went on were such that Department of Social Services contacted Safelight to ask if we could provide shelter in order to help prevent Lily from losing custody of her child.

While in shelter, Lily received counseling and case management and participated in Seeking Safety, a therapy support group. She had dropped out of school and at that time had not attended for a year. Safelight coordinated with the school system to assist her in re-enrolling, providing some temporary child care to help make this possible. Lily has now graduated and received a college scholarship.

Lily exited to a safe home, where the family of a friend offered a nurturing environment and provided some of the “mothering” Lily had never had, as well as providing some practical assistance including help with transportation. Lily wrote Safelight the following letter:

*“Dear Staff,*

*I just want to thank you for all that you have done for me. You have been so kind and wonderful to me each day. When I came here I knew I was safe and had people to talk to when I needed it. You guys turned me into an independent person who refuses to let negative people walk over me anymore. We learned so much from being here and honestly don't want to leave, but family is first. I'm still coming to programs and will write and visit when possible.*

*You guys weren't just a resource for me, but a family and I am proud to have come here. I love you guys! I know you deal with a lot of stuff and I'm sorry. But you are all wonderful at your job. Please never forget that. You all in some way changed my life for the better. When my daughter is old enough I'm going to tell her all about you guys because I now have no shame about living in a shelter with her. It was the best chance and I'd do it longer if I could, but everything happens for a reason and goodbye is never forever.*

*So thank you for guiding me down the right path into my dreams and don't worry you guys Berea (college) is still where I'm headed. So with tear filled eyes I'll say goodbye for now, but I'll see you soon.*

*‘Because there is always hope, a feeling is never permanent’*

*Lily”*