

Melissa H.



Video Link: <http://www.jvsla.org/spreadwings.htm>

From the video "Spreading Our Wings" (copyright 2008) by Katherine Moore & JBL Films, highlighting the work of JVS, a local non-profit assisting youth with job readiness training and placement. For more info, visit www.jvsla.org

My experience in foster care was an experience that helped mold me in who I am today. I became apart of the system of foster care soon after I was born. My mother was diagnosed with a severe psychological disorder, which made her incapable of caring for her child. Because of her illness she had to make a decision of where her child would live, and luckily my grandmother made the choice to take me in. Although I was placed with my grandmother, if she decided at any time that she had me that she didn't want to care for me any longer, I could have been thrown in the cycle of foster home to foster home. Luckily she decided to keep me, and her place was my foster home. Because I was apart of the system at an extremely young age I grew up confused because I would have not just one social worker come to my house, but a number of ones, right after the other. I always wondered why I had so many and not just one. Throughout my lifetime I probably had about 20 or more. I also was a very angry and hurt child because of the fact that I would see other children with their mom and dad and I wanted that. Because of my mother's illness, she made the decision to live the life of a homeless person, and it angered me as a child to watch her have the nerve to come to her mother's house to just get a meal and shower when she was desperate. Also she would lie to me and say she will be back after she goes for a walk when in reality she was leaving me to live a homeless lifestyle with her boyfriend's. I was the only child for seven years, until my mother had four more girls right after the other, until my grandmother had to force her to end the cycle of giving birth. Once I became a teenager is when my life turned around because I went from a private school from K-8 grade to a public school where the world was a complete change for me. Because of the change I got involved in the wrong crowd, and ended up in juvenile hall. I got on probation, but it ended up being a good learning experience because my Probation Officer and ILP coordinator really helped me change my life around when they got me involved with ILP and gave me as many resources as they could find to help me change my life for the better. Once I turned 18 I was able to start a new life and move out on my own thanks to the ILP transitional living program, which really helped me to prepare for bigger responsibilities of living on my own like paying my rent, etc. They also referred me to Jewish Vocational Service which helped me a great deal in preparing me for a fulfilling job/career. With the help of JVS I was able to get the job with the County as clerical support like I've always wanted, and now I have a fulfilling career to look forward to everyday. Now I am able to support my own family and prove to my children and other's that with hard work, dedication and help/support from supportive organizations like ILP & JVS we can live successful lives.