

12 Days of HOPE 4 Youth: Day 5



On the fifth day of Christmas, HOPE 4 Youth helped one of our long-time volunteers save a young man who is like a son to her. The volunteer recently shared his story in a letter to us ...

There once was a five-year-old boy who moved into the house across the street. He quickly became best friends with my son, and all of us parents became the best of friends as well. Throughout the following twenty years, we laughed together, shared our lives, the good and the bad, and supported each other throughout.

This little guy was a ball of fire, diagnosed with ADHD at a young age. Though his antics proved to be very challenging (incredibly so), he continued to be the sweetest kid, helping me carry in groceries or whatever little chore I asked of him. He grew into a sweet young man who still struggled with hyper-activeness that to this day I rarely see in other people. He made mistakes along the way (bad choices), and we all dealt with them and continued to love this kid. He had a hard time learning how to be a responsible adult, even with the good examples set by his family and friends. One day, his parents decided that tough love was needed and they kicked him out of the house at the age of 23, two days before his 24th birthday. They needed to make life not so easy, hoping this would be the catalyst that would help him transition to the “adult” stage.

That day was one of the worst in his life and mine. I spent hours that evening talking this young man down from a ledge. He was bent on suicide, and I couldn't fathom the pain of him not being in our life, let alone the pain it would deal to his family, all very dear friends (mom, dad, grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings-they are all like family to us). That evening, I shared my own struggles with him, secrets I had never shared with anyone. He spoke about a “thing” being his legacy. I told him, “No. Your legacy will be the little child you bring to me some day that I will hold in my arms and love as much as I love you.” Somehow, two human beings connected that night and it saved his life.

I begged him to go to HOPE 4 Youth for support, guidance and love. He did, only two days before he aged out of the program. Staff did everything they could to assist this young man

and give him HOPE in those two short days. It kept him alive and gave him purpose. He moved west to a warmer climate as winter was coming, and he didn't know if he would have a home here in Minnesota. He went alone, but made friends along the way and met his future fiancé. The next year was still a struggle, but it was one he was fighting all by himself. I rarely spoke to him, but he finally contacted his family and continued this rapport to help repair their broken relationships. He announced that he and his fiancé were having a baby, and they moved again to her home state of Tennessee where they continue to reside.

My reason for this letter is to let you know that this young man is here in Minnesota this week with his fiancé and his precious little one-year-old to visit family and friends. This young family is safe, secure and thriving, owning/running their own very successful landscaping business. And, last weekend, he brought his true legacy to our home. His little baby girl, who is so scared of anyone but mom and dad, looked me in the eye and held out her arms to me. I was able to hold her for the very first time, snuggled up with love and warmth and safety. The staff at HOPE 4 Youth helped me save this young man who is like a son to me. I will forever be grateful to all of you and to all who support this organization whether through donations, volunteering or simply praying. Thank you with all my being. Thank you so very much.

Love, Barb

Please consider making a gift this holiday season in honor of our volunteer Barb or any of our other volunteers, so that we can continue to provide programs to change the lives of even more homeless young people. You can make a gift online at www.HOPE4YouthMN.org/Donate or via mail to HOPE 4 Youth, 2191 Northdale Blvd NW, Coon Rapids, MN 55433. Any amount and all gifts are appreciated.