

Countdown to 2020 ... After Living in my Car for a Year, I was Ready.



At this year's Gala 4 HOPE, Kayla shared her story. The entire room was brought to their feet as she left the stage. If you were unable to attend the Gala, please take a few minutes to read her story and how HOPE 4 Youth has empowered her to move forward on her journey.

"My journey with HOPE 4 Youth started 3 years ago when I was 18. My childhood home was foreclosed on and I had nowhere to turn. I was scared. I never thought I would be left without a place to stay. I was struggling with addiction and my mental health. I didn't have consistent work and I just needed help.

When I went to the Drop-In Center for the first time, I was greeted by smiling faces and open arms. I was able to take a shower, eat a hot meal, pick out clothes at the clothing closet and access food and personal care items at the Drop-In Center. The staff at HOPE 4 Youth allowed me to take my time and they encouraged me to let them know when I was ready to start looking for housing. After living in my car for a year, I was ready - I was ready to find a place to call home.

My county social worker told me about HOPE Place. I talked to Sara about it and she had me go for a tour. I moved in on December 1st, 2017. While living at HOPE place, I was able to find a job that I loved. I worked in a daycare center as a teacher's aide. I was also able to work on my mental health with the support of the case managers. During this time, I made many friends. I liked that I could relate to the people living there when it came to things in our personal lives.

I also got involved with TreeHouse, a spiritual support group that is run by volunteers at HOPE 4 Youth's Drop-In Center. TreeHouse helped me grow stronger in my faith and has given me even more people in my support system. The mentors at treehouse are some of my biggest supporters. About once a month, I go out to lunch or coffee with one of the mentors, Jorna (pictured with Kayla above). She helped me realized that I have a life worth living and that I am loved.

After living at hope place for 9 months, I realized I just wasn't ready to be living independently. I moved out and continued with my journey of being homeless. Through that tough time, HOPE 4 Youth continued to support me and was always there for me whenever I needed help.

I am happy to report that I am now living with my family again. Although things are still tough and I still have some really bad days, without the continued encouragement and support from HOPE 4 Youth, I would still be living out of my car and stuck in the downward spiral of my addiction and mental illness. I am now working full-time with people with disabilities at a job I love. I have my own bedroom. And I am proud to share that i have almost one year of sobriety under my belt.

I want to thank all of you for supporting an amazing organization that changes the lives of youth in

our community. Without you and your continued support, I wouldn't be able to share my successes with you. Thank you."