

## Faces of HOPE: Mica Bingel



*Written by Mica Bingel, HOPE Place Program Manager*

I started following HOPE 4 Youth on social media when the doors opened. As I watched the progress and growth, I was amazed at the difference being made for the youth in Anoka County.

I wanted to be a part of this mission — part of the solution for these young people.

I wanted to make a difference at the start of someone's journey, not in the middle or end, as was the case at my previous job. When an opening at HOPE 4 Youth was posted in early 2018, I jumped at the chance to join!

In my wildest dreams, I never thought I would come back to work in my old stomping grounds where I grew up (Ham Lake) and graduated from high school (Blaine). But there I was, a new case manager at [HOPE Place](#), our transitional housing facility in Coon Rapids. I had found the professional growth and the agency that, to this day, continues to fill my cup.



Mica with her husband and grandkids.

## **Inside our work to create pathways**

I am now the HOPE Place Program Manager, and my main goal is to prepare the young people who reside with us for brighter futures. The youth can stay for up to two years. That may sound like a long time, but in reality, there is a lot of growth and education that need to take place in a relatively short period.

During their first month at HOPE Place, we work to develop a plan that meets their individual needs and goals. Each person enters at differing levels of independence, so each plan is different. Depending on a young person's needs, outside agencies may also be involved.

After we agree on a plan, I continue to meet with the youth at least once a week to assess their progress, adjust goals accordingly and encourage them to continue on their road to success. I also have the pleasure of leading our support staff team who is as equally dedicated to the success of every young person who walks through our doors. Additionally, I continue to work on developing programs with community partners tailored to meet the needs of our residents.

Our work is rewarding, even though it can be extremely challenging and emotionally draining — especially when a young person fails to put in the work to achieve their goals.

### **The toughest part of the job**

Case in point: two young people who lived at HOPE Place but left early. During their time with us, despite the programs offered and the many, many talks we shared, neither was ready to make the changes that were needed.

As a case manager and now program manager, this is one of the toughest decisions that must be made. I lay awake at night contemplating and agonizing over what the result will be for the youth. However, sometimes there is no other choice.

When these former residents eventually came back to talk to me, the message was strong. Even though they did not complete the program, the time spent here — in my office, listening to me talk — was not wasted.

One said, "The best thing that happened to me was being asked to leave. I needed to hit rock bottom. When I left, I did."

That young person has made incredible progress. There is still work to be done, but they also know they can do it. They are employed, living in market-rate housing and have recently started to give back to the HOPE Place program through volunteer and support work.

The second young person, who has also accomplished and grown so much and is giving back through volunteering and support work, told me, "Even though I wasn't ready to 'hear you,' you will never know the impact of the things you said to me. I didn't know how important our meetings would become to me."

For me, the lesson is, even though we may not be witness to the growth of the youth in the program, every interaction we have with them can make a difference. If not today, maybe tomorrow or even further down the line.

HOPE 4 Youth is making a difference every day, with every youth we meet. It is so rewarding to be a part of the solution for so many young adults — even if those solutions unfolded beyond our doors.

This story is part of a series profiling people who've come together to support HOPE 4 Youth's mission to offer young people pathways out of homelessness. [Read more profiles.](#)