



Dear

Jessica thought being 15 years old would be so amazing, but it turned out to be anything but amazing.

Life was relatively normal up until about a year and a half ago when her dad vanished out of state, leaving her mom with three kids and expensive rent to manage on her own. Slowly, Jessica's mom faded away into depression, alcohol, and finally drugs, all but forgetting that Jessica and the little boys needed her – to keep them safe, to keep them warm, to love them. When her mom seemed to “forget” to go to work, the resources dried up. When the meager food ran out, Jessica's little brothers did not even complain, they just cried quietly in her arms. Her tummy hurt too, but she had to be strong as she was the only one they had left.

Being 15 should not mean foraging for food in the dumpster behind a nearby restaurant. It should not mean being the caregiver for her 5- and 7-year-old brothers. It should not mean your mom turning a blind eye to her drug dealer “spending time” with you in exchange for the rent being paid. But for Jessica, it did – she was not old enough for a job and the fear of being separated from her brothers kept her silent. Jessica came to feel trapped, guilt ridden for being angry, devastated, and hopeless because her mother gave up.

Jessica was being sexually abused in exchange for rent and she and her young brothers were neglected, malnourished, and resigned to this existence. If their own mom and dad did not care about them, no one else would either.

Thankfully, an observant neighbor did care. That neighbor alerted the police after seeing the little boys holding hands and sitting silently outside the apartment in the hallway, only allowed back inside when the suspicious-looking man left each evening.

And that is when hope reared its head in the form of the National Children's Advocacy Center. Hope slipped into their lives with snacks and drink boxes, clean clothes, snuggles from facility dog Wilson, and the people at the NCAC who made them feel cared for and valued.

It took Jessica and her brothers nearly four months to trust the adults at the NCAC enough to disclose the horrors and trauma that had been inflicted on them. They had been betrayed by all the adults they had ever known and assumed this would be no different. Eventually all three of these children detailed their abuse and neglect and fear of what was ahead for them. They all received medical exams that showed minor bruises and signs of malnourishment, and equally important, they received counseling that taught them worth, value, and confidence.

The foster home where they live together is not perfect, but it is warm and safe. They need to also feel loved, supported, and encouraged – they desperately need HOPE. Their journey to healing will be a long, difficult path and they cannot travel it without YOU.

Your support makes the healing possible. You are the most critical piece. You give them hope. This work of healing and helping children move past a terrifying life experience is not possible without your support, your engagement, and your prayers.

Will you consider a gift of \$100 or more to support Jessica and her brothers as well as all the children of our community?

With thanks,



Chris Newlin, MS LPC  
Executive Director  
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