

The Gift of Hope

Layla's story

Layla was trembling when she arrived at WIN House with her two children.

She was frightened, overwhelmed and uncertain of the future. Even the simplest things felt so difficult. Her hair was tangled into three tight knots, so two staff members sat beside her for nearly two hours and gently brushed it out, while she sat and shook.

Think about that moment. After all she had endured, two people simply sat with her. No judgment. No expectations. Just patience, kindness and compassion. Sometimes the first thing a person needs is not an answer. It is someone willing to stay.

Layla and her children needed somewhere safe to go, somewhere that did not send them back to the circumstances she was trying to leave.

"Having WIN House meant, honestly, a second chance, really."

That second chance was built through more than a safe place to stay. It was built through people who believed in her, practical supports and time to heal, not a collection of past experiences or assumptions.

When she was overwhelmed, there was someone available to listen. When she needed to navigate the justice system, the Justice Navigator accompanied her to court and helped her face an intimidating process that could otherwise have felt impossible to manage alone.

"I never had to do anything alone."

And sometimes, it was the smallest signs of caring that stayed with her most.

Layla remembers a staff member who continued to believe in her, even when she experienced a setback. She recalls being reminded of the progress she had made and being encouraged not to give up on herself.

For someone who had not always felt that people were in her corner, that belief mattered.

“It was like someone cares.”

For Layla, one of the greatest joys is seeing her children enjoy the simple things of childhood. At WIN House, moments of connection, play and care became part of their family's journey. As time passed, Layla began to notice changes in her family, too. She remembers how different life felt when the doorbell rang and her children were no longer reacting with the same fear. Her kids are simply being kids, enjoying the ordinary moments every child deserves. Imagine what that must feel like as a mother.

Layla is beginning to look beyond survival and imagine a future of her own. In the coming months, Layla is set to begin studying addictions and mental health, with the hope of one day working in a women's shelter. She wants to use what she has learned and experienced to support others who may one day need someone to sit beside them, too.

When she talks about what matters most during the holidays, her answer is not about presents or what might be under a tree. It is about having her children home, and being able to share peace, happiness and safety together.

Her words are simple, but they say so much:

“It's just about having peace and being happy and being safe really.”

Layla's story is still being written. But she is looking ahead with plans, purpose and a growing sense of what life can hold — possibility and hope.

A gift of hope can reach far beyond one moment. It can mean a safe place, someone who believes in you, support through difficult steps and the chance to imagine a different future, for a parent and for their children.

This holiday season, your generosity helps make that kind of support possible at WIN House.

Give a Gift That Matters. Give a Future Beyond Violence.

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Layla is a pseudonym. Names and certain identifying details have been changed or withheld to protect the privacy and safety of the individuals and their families. We are grateful to her for sharing her story with us.