

With Hope Anything Is Possible

Agency: Sioux Falls Housing & Redevelopment Commission

Program: Family Self-Sufficiency

Service: Assists with low-income individuals and adult family members who are receiving housing assistance by eliminating barriers and reducing obstacles to gaining education and employment skills.

Need: There are over 2700 people on the waiting list for housing assistance. Currently 1672 households are receiving assistance through the Sioux Falls Housing & Redevelopment Commission. There are 71 individuals on the waiting list for Family Self-Sufficiency programs.

What does that mean to me? Through the assistance of Family Self-Sufficiency, nearly 490 hours of one-on-one assistance with goal development and progress were provided, 184 participants attended workshops and events in 2008. Family Self-Sufficiency helps participants improve their earning capacity, thereby reducing welfare and promoting family well-being and stability.

Fleeing from your home and starting a new life without the support of friends and family sounds like a plot from a movie, but it is the story line of Elizabeth's life.

"I moved here in 1997," said Elizabeth, "We didn't know anyone; I had no idea where to go or what to do."

Prior to moving to the US, Elizabeth's family had been on the run fleeing from religious persecution.

"At home, people helped with my laundry, I didn't have to scrape money together for groceries," said Elizabeth, "It wasn't a struggle to make it through each day."

But shortly after moving to Sioux Falls things changed, and quickly. Elizabeth's husband left her with six children, no job, and no one to turn to. That's when she found the Family Self Sufficiency program at Sioux Falls Housing and Redevelopment Commission. Family Self Sufficiency is a program that provides positive opportunities for low income families to eliminate unemployment, gain training or education, and promote family stability through working with other community services to promote the best options available to individuals using the services.

"I was at the end of my rope. I felt like the whole world was against me," said Elizabeth, "that's when I met Sharon at Family Self Sufficiency. I went home and I told my children I met our angel today."

That was four years ago. Today Elizabeth is working in a supervisory position at a local business, has four children in college, two of which are in graduate school, and a fifth preparing for college. The youngest is in grade school.

"The greatest gift anyone can give you is help to stand on your own two feet," said Elizabeth. "And that's what Family Self Sufficiency has given me."

Last year, nearly 90 people like Elizabeth had the opportunity to stand on their own two feet thanks to Family Self Sufficiency and support from Sioux Empire United Way. "This program is helping real people; real people who want a better life. It brings hope and with hope anything is possible."