

Maria - Courage, Positivity and Conviction

Abused. Broken. Empty. These are the words Maria uses to describe life growing up in a home filled with domestic violence. As the oldest of five children, she witnessed the abuse between her parents and many times bore the brunt herself. She found love and acceptance in fragmented relationships, and became a young mother to nine children only to repeat the cycle she grew up in.

Hoping to exchange loss and a troubled past for a new start, Maria traveled to San Antonio with her children and partner. But struggles soon followed and with nowhere to live, they bounced among multiple shelters. Stress and uncertainty led to abuse.

But when the abuse flowed over to her children, she knew something had to change. Maria explains, "I was tired of living the way I was. I don't know where my courage came from, but that was enough." She left with nothing – no money, no vehicle, and no support. However, she now had the will to change and stand on her own. Maria sought refuge at a women's shelter, and through various referrals, connected with Goodwill San Antonio. Goodwill provided an immediate opportunity for employment and provided assistance with child care. In February 2017, Maria started working as a Retail Associate for Goodwill and soon moved into transitional living with her children at a local shelter.



Maria has since gained full-time employment in a Goodwill store and is learning to be self-sufficient. Her Goodwill team has become her extended family, providing continued support and encouragement. Maria works hard because she wants to do something more for her and her children. Maria's counseling is helping her learn how to trust, how to cope, and more importantly, how to love.

Working for Goodwill, Maria is now taking care of her children and providing for them in ways she has never done before. Maria says with hopefulness, "I may be living in a shelter, in one room with my kids, but I am grateful for what we have—a roof, food and we are all together. We are truly blessed." Continuing to build family time with her children is important to Maria. "I wasn't a good mom to them before. I know I am a good mom now. I help them with homework. I go to their school events. They come first," she explains. "I'm proud of the mother I've become."

Thankful for the stability she has gained, Maria now contemplates life in the future. She hopes to someday gain a management position, and is saving for her own apartment and vehicle. With the support of Goodwill, Maria knows she is on the path to where she wants to go. "Enough was enough. I wanted to stop the cycle. This job, this blessing, has enabled me to move forward."