



Jessica never felt like belonged at home due to neglect in her childhood. She bounced between mental health facilities until the age of 18, never feeling the safety of a stable home. She was experiencing homelessness in Indiana when an online friend paid for her way to Seattle. “It was starting to get cold out here and I figured my chances of resources would be a lot better up in the city.” So, her life on the streets began. When she describes living on the streets, she had a hard time when it was rainy and cold. It was especially difficult to find a place to use the bathroom. She described living on the streets, “you don’t have a sense of stability. The shelters were first come first serve, so you’re (sic) not guaranteed anything.” Some nights she had no choice but to sleep outside.

It wasn’t until Jessica started to come to Street Youth Ministries that she felt stability, “Knowing that there was stuff right there, that this place would be open, that there would be people there to help you – that was a sense of stability that helped out (sic).” With a safe environment to go to, SYM gave Jessica the opportunity to do things she dreamed of doing since being a kid. “I never had a change to go to a baseball game or to the Nutcracker. I’ve never done anything like that,” she says as she remembers different activities SYM did, “It was amazing, it was like dreams coming true.” Soon enough she was able to find a home at University Presbyterian Church, “I used to sit outside waiting for the drop-in center to open. One time, Tammy came over and invited me to come inside.”

After a connecting with the staff at UPC, Jessica would sit inside and listen to the evening worship practice. Over time she became more comfortable at UPC and with the people there. “I remember before I came out to Seattle, I said a prayer, ‘God, will you please show me a church that feels like home.’ For some reason, UPC felt like home to me. I felt more at home there than any other place in my life.” Now, Jessica is living in a group home which is helping her achieve great things, like an opportunity to go to college. “I want to do visual communications which will allow me to do graphic design.” Looking back at her life she says she most proud of making friends at SYM and keeping them. She says to all the volunteers who help people like her, “Just because they don’t show they’re grateful at the time, it’s one of the best resources in their life. Some of us are truly grateful. It’s a big blessing.”