

# A LETTER FROM A CLIENT

## From Being Unhoused to Finding Hope

The summer after high school for most teens is a time to celebrate with friends and family before going off to college. This wasn't my reality. I found myself and all of my belongings packed into my car while couch surfing and floating between motels. I was 18 with very little income and depended on the kindness of strangers at the food pantry to sustain me.

Some motels were better than others, while most were filthy, with cigarette holes in the covers, needles on the floor, and individuals who struggled with substance abuse and sex workers roaming the halls. Despite it, most nights I was just happy to have a roof over my head.

When my boyfriend and I put our funds together, we could afford a decent motel, typically closer to \$500 a week if we wanted access to a kitchen. My boyfriend worked long, hard hours doing manual labor. He would drink to ease the physical and emotional stress he felt to provide. This meant many nights, he would come home late and drunk, typically angry about his day, and hurl insults at me.

He criticized how hopeful I could be facing our odds. I could feel he resented me for my youth and naivety to the gravity of our situation. I knew I wouldn't be able to stay with him long term, so I looked into shelters and other housing options available.

I would leave and come back to him many times before qualifying for a housing program for young adults. It would be my first time having an apartment and I was happy to have a consistent place to rest my head. It was through this program that I was first introduced to Home Sweet Home.

**Much to my surprise, I would have the autonomy to pick out my own furniture. I was overwhelmed with joy and excitement.**

When I walked into the facility, I was greeted by friendly staff and treated with respect—something I hadn't had much of during my time experiencing homelessness. They gave me as much time as I needed to process and helped me think about what my life might look like in my new home. They helped me make decisions I had never made before like what type of table might be a good fit for me and my lifestyle or what kind of cookware I might need.

**I left Home Sweet Home feeling empowered, like I could take on the world.**

I am proud to say that I still have my first set of plates and bowls from Home Sweet Home. They remind me of the time I spent in motels or sleeping in my car—but that's just one part of my story. These plates also remind me of how much I have overcome, my resilience and also the love and respect I have been shown by strangers and organizations such as Home Sweet Home. It reminds me how something so small, such as donating a cup or a plate, can make a world of difference to someone in need.



I don't take it for granted the support I received from Home Sweet Home; without them I never would be in the position I am today. I am currently a second-year master's student at the Saint Louis University School of Social Work. The work that this organization does and the kindness of the staff members through the executive leadership has never ceased to amaze me. I cannot thank Home Sweet Home enough for the positive impact it has made on my life.