

# SUCCESS STORIES.

When a community joins hands, everyone wins.



## Stephiny Finds Her Voice and Her Place

**CORE IMPACT AREA:** Education

**MEMBER NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION:** Seven Corners Children's Center



If you say hello to five-year-old Stephiny Zelaya of Fairfax, she will not respond. If you smile and try again, she still will not respond. But if you try a third time, she will smile back at you and say, "Good afternoon."

Not so long ago, Stephiny's silence would have been total silence. At that time, according to her mother, Roxana Serrano, Stephiny never spoke at all. Although she might sometimes string together a few words, they were a hodgepodge -- intelligible to no one beside herself.

"We didn't know what to do," Roxana said.

Thankfully, the staff at Seven Corners Children's Center in Falls Church did know what to do. United Way NCA is a supporter of the Center, and has been for a long time.

The 68 students attending the Seven Corners center hail from 30 countries. Although many of the children were born in the United States, most of the parents were not. Many mothers do not have husbands to help support the household. And with little experience in a modern society like ours, many struggle to find and keep jobs.

Specialists worked with Stephiny for more than two years to bolster her confidence and language skills. By the fall of 2010, she was ready to begin kindergarten in the Fairfax County Public Schools. By all accounts, she is doing very well.

Stephiny now has friends among her classmates. She routinely gets perfect scores on her spelling and writing tests. Best of all, she speaks--intelligibly and often.

Today, she has as bright a future as any other child.

"We realize every child is different," said Ward, who has been the director of the Seven Corners Children's Center for more than 20 years. "But when she wasn't saying anything at all...that worried us. I worried that the schools would type her as a child with retardation, when I was pretty sure that wasn't the situation."

"No one was advocating for her," said Mary Ellen Ward. "She needed special help. And we were able to get it for her."

Your United Way NCA donations helped make this little piece of progress possible. With you help, United Way NCA helps put children on the path to success in education.

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## From Struggling Refugees to a Self-Sufficient Family

**CORE IMPACT AREA:** Financial Stability

**MEMBER NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION:** Family Home



The Cabasares family came to the Family Home, a United Way NCA-supported shelter in Arlington, VA, after exhausting all of its other options.

Angelique wanted to be a good mother, but she needed a job – one that gave her enough flexibility to accommodate the demands of her daughter Julieta’s kindergarten schedule. This was Julieta’s first time in a structured education setting, and English was not her primary language.

Doorways staff quickly learned that language and cultural issues were only a part of the family’s problems. Angelique did not know how to manage her finances, she seemed distant from her daughter, and suffered trauma in her home country and as a refugee.

To end the cycle of family homelessness, programs need to deal with all aspects of their physical, mental, and financial wellbeing. With help from United Way NCA, Family Home was able to offer the Cabasares a wide-range of services, including one-on-one financial literacy coaching and family counseling.

The concept of talking to a counselor was new to Angelique. But after several meetings with Doorways’ Client Services Coordinator (CSC), she began sharing the trauma of her life as a refugee. The CSC worked tirelessly to find Angelique a therapist who spoke her language, and specialized in addressing refugee trauma.

Angelique also received training in budgeting, saving and debt management to help rebuild credit. Doorways’ Financial Educator met weekly with Angelique and she was a very determined participant in learning how to budget and manage her finances. In addition, counselors helped Angelique find a job that fit her schedule.

By the time the Cabasares family was ready to move into their own apartment, Angelique knew how to budget and was able to continue working on the challenges she and her family faced. Through United Way NCA, a family that had never before lived on its own now had the tools and the confidence to start a new life.

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## Access to Dental Health Care Restores Desire to Succeed

CORE IMPACT AREA: Health

MEMBER NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION: PRS, Inc.



Rima is a client who received dental services through PRS' Dental Care Access Program, which is supported by funds from United Way NCA.

She tells her story in her own words.

"It had been years since I'd seen a dentist. I knew I was in trouble because I just didn't have the money. I would often feel anxious about my teeth getting worse, even though I wasn't in any kind of pain. A certain tooth was ruining my smile.

What happens if you don't get dental check-ups is that - especially if you're not taking good care of your teeth by regularly flossing and brushing - your dental health can seriously deteriorate. And that can lead to either losing your teeth or expensive dental work, because it's not just one tooth that gets in trouble, it's your entire mouth.

Sadly, a person like me with a mental illness, who can't work full-time, doesn't get dental benefits. And long gone are the days when my parents had me covered on their insurance policy, so they could take me to the dentist.

When my case manager at PRS informed me there was a dental fund that allowed clients to have free restorative dental work done, I couldn't believe it. How could something so nice possibly exist?

Someone out there was so generous to think of people like me and donate money. Finally I could stop putting off having that checkup and fixing my teeth because there's a way to go to an approved dentist, who would then bill PRS.

### You Saved My Smile

I had begun to picture myself as being really ugly as I got older because of missing teeth, and every day I was dreading that some tooth was going to start hurting. But for more than a year now, PRS has really helped me, and without PRS in my life I don't know where I and my teeth would be.

I'm grateful to my dentist for teaching me the importance of taking better care of my teeth, and I'm doing it now because I've now gotten a new sense of responsibility."