

POINTS NEIGHBORS PROVIDE **HOPE** TO **Struggling Families**

Written by **Rachael Eichner**

Imagine this: you are a young, single parent of an 11-year-old girl. Your daughter is happy and healthy and for that, you are grateful, but it feels like you're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. Growing up you experienced homelessness so you are no stranger to the challenges of life. You lost your mom a few years ago, and she was the only family you had. Since she's been gone, there isn't anyone to lean on for support with things like childcare or help with groceries.

You've always done your best despite the challenges you've faced. You found an affordable apartment to rent for you and your daughter. It's tiny, but it's in a safe neighborhood. You have a good job working at your local café, and you also nanny for your neighbor down the hall for extra cash. You've been putting away money little by little to save for a car. A car would open up so many opportunities for you and your daughter.

Then COVID-19 hits, and you are suddenly at risk of losing everything you worked so hard to build. The café where you work closes indefinitely. Months pass before the family you nanny for feels safe to have you return. Meanwhile, you burned straight through the savings you worked so hard to build up for that car. The uncertainties of everyday life are constantly looming over you. Will the odd jobs you've been taking on be enough to cover the bills? Will you have enough for groceries next week? Will your daughter catch the virus now that she is back in school? She started middle school this year. Will she do okay? She struggled so hard to keep up during remote learning. Both of you did. In the pit of your stomach, you fear that your daughter will have to experience the same pressures of poverty that you did at her age.

Despite all this stress, you don't give up. You are forced to ask for help. You hear about Bellevue LifeSpring and learn that you qualify for emergency rent assistance. Having your rent paid will prevent you from falling further behind financially. Now, you finally don't have to worry about you and your daughter being evicted when the eviction moratorium is lifted. You also learn that Bellevue LifeSpring provides grocery store food vouchers to children from low-income households. Your



daughter has several food intolerances. The food vouchers will allow you to shop for the food she needs that won't make her feel sick.

For the first time in what seems like forever, you are able to breathe a sigh of relief. You can even start to see a glimmer of light at the end of this long pandemic tunnel. Not being in full-on survival mode gives you the time you need to find a new steady job. You can give your daughter the attention and care she needs. You hold your daughter close and persevere onward.

Your Support Gives Hope

Thanks to the generosity of Points residents, families with stories similar to the family above don't have to experience the traumas of homelessness or hunger. Since the start of the pandemic, your support has helped prevent homelessness for over 900 Bellevue children and has provided over 800,000 meals to Bellevue students who depend on food provided by their school's free and reduced-price lunch programs.

Bellevue children from low-income families are continuing to feel the devastating economic impacts of the pandemic. Even a small change in wage earnings can put a family at immediate risk of hunger and homelessness. Together as a community, we can help break the cycle of poverty and continue to ensure no child in Bellevue experiences hunger or homelessness.

Visit www.bellevuelifespring.org and take action today.

When we give where we live, everyone benefits.