

HELP MAKE THE HOLIDAY SEASON BRIGHTER FOR THOSE IN NEED

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Olivia's next meal may have to wait. Olivia is a second grader who has loved animals ever since her family adopted her first pet — a cat she named Whiskers. When she grows up, Olivia wants to become a veterinarian and help cats, just like Whiskers. But before Olivia can become a veterinarian, she needs to grow up healthy and happy.

Olivia lives here in Bellevue with her mom and her older brother, Jack. Two months ago, Olivia's mom got injured at her job while working as a home health aide. Ever since her mom's injury, Olivia has noticed that things at home have been different — mostly, she sees there is less food in the fridge.

Olivia's mom, Maria, has always worked hard. She has to as a single parent. When she hurt her back lifting an elderly client, she suddenly could not continue her job. Maria has no safety net, and her worker's compensation is only a portion of what she was earning — not enough to keep up with the bills.

The fear of being unable to feed Olivia and Jack hangs over Maria's head. She pits one bill against the other — the car payment against the internet bill, the electric bill against her credit card bill and, most recently, the grocery bill against her rent bill.

Olivia has begun to rely on eating the breakfast and lunch provided at her school, but now, there are no snacks when she gets home. Dinner has started looking different too. Olivia notices that they are eating the same thing most nights and that Jack has been splitting his portions with their mom.

Olivia's story is similar to many children whose families are experiencing food and housing insecurity. More than 4,000 Bellevue students do not have access to stable food support. Nearly 400 of these students are also experiencing some form of homelessness. These are the reported numbers — there are more. Some families do not feel comfortable self-reporting due to the fear or embarrassment surrounding the stigmas associated with being identified as low-income or experiencing homelessness.

More than 50% of the families Bellevue LifeSpring supports are single-parent households like Maria and her children. Living



on one income makes it easier to slide into food and housing insecurity after just one unexpected hardship.

When Maria asked for help, she was referred to Bellevue LifeSpring by the family engagement specialist at Olivia's school. Thanks to our caring community, we could provide Maria and her children with grocery store food vouchers and support to cover a month of rent. This support will help Maria as she works to recover from her injury and get back to work. She can rest easier knowing that Olivia and Jack have the food they need to stay healthy and ready to learn.

NEW HOLIDAY SEASON, NEW COMMITMENTS

Due to inflation and the increasing cost of living, the need only continues to grow in our community. As we approach the holiday season, we tend to prioritize giving and consider what new resolutions we want to set for the new year. This holiday season, consider giving where you live and supporting Bellevue kids.

Bellevue LifeSpring has many great ways to get involved and make an impact on children in our community, just like Olivia. When students have their basic needs met, they are more likely to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

Please help us make the holiday season bright for all Bellevue children. Learn more at www.bellevuelifespring.org/holidayprogram.