

Katie's Story

Community is the common thread woven throughout **Katie's journey from homelessness to home.**



Katie spent much of her life without a community- bouncing through several foster homes as a child. The alcoholism and abuse that marked her turbulent childhood etched feelings of distrust and uncertainty in both herself and the people around her.

She had her first child as a teenager and met her partner, Anna, while working and going to school. Though they lived on razor-thin margins, they made ends meet until shortly after the birth of their second child, when a health complication began a chain of events that unraveled their family's stability.

Anna was diagnosed with a painful autoimmune disorder that rendered her unable to work. Without a social support net, Anna's illness necessitated a cross-country move to New Mexico, where she could qualify for Medicaid and they could stay with family while she received treatment. When they arrived however, their housing plan collapsed, the cost of medication and unreliability of work depleted their savings, and eventually relegated their family to living in their car.

For Katie, that time alone in a new city was the darkest time of her life. *"I was truly stranded at a place in life where I had no connections and even though I had Anna by my side, I had never felt more alone."*



After stays in shelters, her family was referred to Saranam, where she and her family found the community and support that was the missing link in their journey.

It is the community, Katie says, that has been the key ingredient to her family's success. The unpredictability of homelessness made it difficult to create meaningful connections and left them painfully isolated. But at Saranam, *"I witnessed first-hand, how patience, compassion, respect, and understanding from one human being to another can make all the difference in someone's life."*

The encouragement and openness shown by their peers, volunteers, and staff has built an unshakeable foundation of trust for their lives.

That support allowed them to blossom. During their two years in the program, Katie, and Anna both completed the first year of an associate's degree in sociology and plan to transfer to UNM when they are completed. Anna's goal is to pursue a career in criminal justice and Katie hopes to help native communities through a study of Indian Law.

Their family became self-sufficient and moved into their own apartment ahead of schedule. Beyond securing housing, their independence made them feel whole again and rejuvenated their confidence. With their basic needs assured and a secure future at hand, Anna's health has also improved, which decreases their worries about supporting their family in the future.



Katie has taken her appreciation of community full circle and is now an active volunteer. It's not only helped her pay it forward but given her a sense of accomplishment knowing she can give back the same generosity others showed to her family.

"I've been on both sides of the giving circle and know the inspiring and heart-warming feeling of knowing that a complete stranger wanted to help my family. It has restored my faith in humanity and showed me how I could help be a part of change."

Though it was difficult, her family's journey has shaped her, she says. *"It was through my experience being homeless that I uncovered strengths I had forgotten I had, like courage, perseverance, and resilience. And it was only when I found my home at Saranam that I truly began to love myself again."*