

Melody's Story

Achieving Her Dreams

Melody was 21 years old with a 3-month-old son and on the verge of homelessness when she learned about Zoe's Place, a program of Children's Aid and Family Services. A supportive home for young mothers and their babies, Zoe's Place provides assistance and guidance for accessing educational opportunities, job training, life and parenting skills, health care and employment, as well as child care and mentoring.

About a week after interviewing at Zoe's Place, Melody and her baby moved in. "It's a nice, big, clean house," she says. "I fell in love with it." The staff also made sure Melody and her baby had all of the essentials they needed, such as diapers, toiletries and baby gear.

Zoe's Place provides free child care, and the young women that live in the home must either attend school or work full-time. Melody enrolled in vocational school and earned a Medical Assistant Certificate and began working. "I saved money while I was there and became more independent," she says.



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During the year that Melody and her son lived at Zoe's Place, she formed close bonds with the other young moms. "We cooked for each other and watched one another's kids," she says.

"We grew stronger together."

Today, Melody is 27 years old and has a full-time job at a hospital in Bergen County. She is studying Healthcare Administration online, fitting in her studies in between work and caring for her son. "I always wanted to have a career in the healthcare field and help people," she says. "I'm gaining experience at my job and my goal is to earn a bachelor's degree so I have more opportunities."

Her hard work has paid off this past year. Melody earned two promotions, and after years of living with a roommate, she moved into her own apartment a few months ago. "I don't know where I'd be without Children's Aid and I'm very grateful," she says. "They've helped me come such a long way."

Melody still stays in touch with the staff at Zoe's Place. She continues to receive one-on-one mentoring from Tisha Mender, our Mobility Mentoring Specialist. Children's Aid helped her put together a security deposit for her apartment and provided her with a bus card so she can travel to work. "Melody knows what she wants and she works hard for it," says Tisha. "She won't let an obstacle get in her way of building a better future. I'm so proud of her."

One of Melody's long-term goals is to own a home. "My mother passed away and although I have some support, it's not a big support system," she says. "Being an independent mother is not easy. The staff at Zoe's Place encourages me to look above and beyond."

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A sense of community and support: Melody, second from left, with some of the mothers and staff from Zoe's Place.

Zoe's Place has been home to 80 young mothers and their babies since 2014. This vital program is providing young women such as Melody with the guidance and support they need to build brighter futures for themselves and their children.

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Thank You!



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