

UNITED WE FIGHT. UNITED WE WIN.

LIVE UNITED

Although the world we live in can at times seem chaotic, most of us who live in Happy Valley feel safe and secure. Most...not all. The Centre County United Way Partner Network is so important to our community because they provide the safety net that catches those in our community who are not as safe and secure, as they should be.

One example of how the network collaborates to keep people safe is described in this true story:

*In the spring of 2016, Karla and her daughter, Alana, moved to State College from Puerto Rico, to live with a relative. The living arrangement promise was broken when the family member abused Karla. Karla went into survival mode. She hung on to her guiding principal: do what is best for her daughter and be a good Mom. That led her to **Housing Transitions**, with a referral from **Child Development and Family Council**, a CCUW Partner Agency, who connected with her at Alana's school.*

Once Children and Youth Services accompanied the pair to Centre House, the staff there began to brainstorm as to how to explain what it would be like for Karla and Alana to stay at the shelter. An interpreter helped staff explain the rules, responsibilities, and expectations, as well as the assistance they would get while staying at Centre House. Community building started almost immediately as current residents in the shelter enjoyed the novelty of communicating, translating applications, and trying to speak Spanish.

*Within a couple of weeks, Karla was planning for stable housing and keeping her daughter in school. There were many steps along the way, like learning more English and gaining employment. The staff connected Karla with **Global Connections**, a CCUW partner agency, to work with a conversation partner and helped her sign up for English as a Second Language classes with **Mid-State Literacy Council**, a CCUW partner agency. They also worked with Global Connections and the **Centre County Women's Resource Centre**, a CCUW partner agency, to secure translators for things like attending doctor and dentist appointments and completing applications.*

*By the end of the summer, Alana was speaking more English and Karla was very excited to start a new job. They were ready to move into a transitional housing unit through Housing Transitions. **Interfaith Human Services**, a CCUW partner agency, was able to help her gain enough funds for her security deposit. Karla and Alana have enjoyed the independence that has come from having an apartment of their own. Both have appreciated the support received from community organizations like the Salvation Army and Saint Vincent De Paul. The Housing Case Manager at Housing Transitions continues to work with Karla to plan for the future and find housing that is more permanent. In the meantime, we can appreciate having both Karla and Alana being part of our community where they are working, going to school, and making a life.*

We all love a happy ending. What is special about this story is that we, as a community, played a vital part in creating the success through our donations to Centre County United Way.

