

# Your United Way Dollars At Work

## Supporting Families

### Jennifer's Story



Jennifer graduated from college in 1998. She felt a tremendous amount of pride and confidence in her ability to turn her hard work into a bright future. But in January, 1999, an unexpected tragedy changed the course of her future. Jennifer's mother had a stroke, leaving her paralyzed on one side of her body. Her mother was confined to a wheelchair, and unable to care for herself. Jennifer quickly realized the severity of the situation and knew that she wouldn't be able to work and take care of her mother. She made the difficult choice to stay at home to focus on caring for her mother.

In March, as her mother was going through physical therapy, Jennifer discovered that she was pregnant, and she had to break the news to her mother while she was dealing with the challenges the stroke posed. Worse yet, money was tight—they lived on her mother's social security benefits. In their home, meeting their most basic needs became incredibly challenging. Finally, the power company shut off the electricity, and Jennifer, feeling frustrated and not knowing where to turn for help, went outside to sit on the front steps of her house to think. While she was sitting there, a Yellow Pages delivery person threw a phone book at her steps, hitting her in the leg. She picked it up and started paging through, and under "Maternity," she saw a listing for an agency that operates in-home maternity services in low-income neighborhoods. She called and spoke to the receptionist, and a maternity care advocate soon came to her home. Together, they worked to find Jennifer health insurance, helped her get to her appointments on time, and even helped Jennifer find some home assistance for her mother.

Jennifer gave birth to a healthy baby girl, and she continued her relationship with the agency for the baby's first year—getting help with parenting, nutrition, well-baby visits and care. The relationship was so strong that Jennifer was approached and asked if she ever considered working with the agency as an advocate. Jennifer thought about it and went on an interview for the position.

Almost two years later, Jennifer is working as a prenatal family advocate.

The maternity support organization is just one of the many programs United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania partners with so that individuals, families and communities have the basic supports they need to be happy, healthy, and reach their full potential.