**The Impact of the Community Assistance Network (CAN): Barbara's Story**

Barbara moved to Williamsburg from New York with her 3 children in August 2021, after going through difficulties with her family that left her in a financially insecure situation. Barbara was working but had fallen behind on payments from an old electric bill and hotel stay, which prevented her from getting approved for an apartment upon arriving here. She also relied on the assistance received from child support to provide adequate shelter for herself and her children. Because her child support was in New York and courts were backed up due to challenges related to the pandemic, Barbara’s ability to get her proof of income processed was delayed, and the lack of that financial support left Barbara with no choice but to sleep in her car with her 3 children. Feeling not just financially, but physically and mentally frustrated, Barbara reached out to the **Community Assistance Network (CAN)** where she was connected to an advocate. The advocate was able to pool resources from 5 community partners across the Williamsburg area, allowing Barbara and her children to stay at a motel for 3 weeks. She was also referred to the Virginia Eviction Reduction Pilot (VERP) and received about $2,000 in assistance that enabled her to pay off her electric bill, and as well as a deposit and first month’s rent for an apartment.

Earlier this year (March 2022), Barbara called UWVP eager to make a donation “hoping this will help someone else going through a difficult time.” Barbara spoke very highly about the assistance she received through CAN, and shared “I will never forget what your advocate did for me. She didn’t take ‘no’ for an answer and fought for me and my children as if we were her own. She went above and beyond, and I am so grateful that United Way is here doing this work.” Barbara made a $100 donation, and also expressed her interest in volunteering, then continued “Please, share my story. Share it with those who need help, those who have donated, and those who have volunteered. I look forward to giving again soon, and being able to help.”

If you or anyone you know is facing a poverty related crises and resides on the Virginia Peninsula, call our **Community Assistance Network (CAN)** at **757-229-2222**.

