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Because of generous supporters like you, we can share this inspiring story of resilience. This is one family’s journey – ***a journey that would have ended differently if not for your compassion and support and that of the greater community.*** While this is but one story, lives are transformed at Relief Nursery every day. Here is Sarah, in her own words, describing how you are making a difference to her family.

Sarah Ramirez remembers as a 7-year-old, hitchhiking with her mother and younger brother from California to Eugene. She describes her mom as a gypsy of sorts who was parenting as her own mother had taught her. Sarah never met her father. Her childhood was a textbook case of generational chaos, neglect, and abuse.

They settled in Glenwood and over the next several years, Sarah roamed the neighborhood with little supervision from her mother or her mother’s second husband who Sarah calls ‘a bad man.’ “He did bad things to me and my mother kicked him out. She took him back and then he started abusing my brother. She kicked him out again, but took him back. That was their cycle. It was a horrible situation,” Sarah recalls.

*During that time Sarah found herself among friends who – like her – had been abused and neglected. She began using drugs and making dangerous choices. At 17, she became pregnant and quit using drugs. She gave birth to a beautiful baby girl while the baby’s father was in prison. Sarah named her Jayden. **“I didn’t know how to raise her. I didn’t have the tools. I had no support,”** says Sarah. After she and Jayden left the hospital, they moved in with Sarah’s mother. It was a trying and volatile situation and, eventually, her mother forced Sarah to leave but kept baby Jayden. In utter despair, Sarah started using again.*

*While Sarah’s mother had the baby, she would occasionally leave her with a local pastor’s wife. The pastor’s wife began to notice odd marks on Jayden along with constant diaper rash and poor nutrition. She called child protective services. Little Jayden became part of the foster care system and Sarah’s parental rights were terminated. The foster mother ended up adopting and raising Jayden. **Sarah hopes their relationship can be healed someday.***



*Back on the streets, Sarah met Manuel, who also was a drug addict. Soon Sarah became pregnant and when their son Brent was born, she found herself involved with child protective services again. Even though they both had stopped using drugs, again, she lost custody of her child. **Her painful and troubled history both as a child and as a parent hindered her ability to keep her son.** Sarah and Manuel desperately wanted to raise their son.*

*They wanted another chance – but needed help. **That’s when Relief Nursery entered the story.***

Sarah and Manuel attended Relief Nursery’s Parents for Recovery classes. “We learned parenting styles and how to have fun while sober. We were like sponges, eager to learn and Pamper Me Days were such a special treat for me,” she re-

calls. Ray Brown, who is now a Program Director at Relief Nursery was Manuel's Peer Support worker, and Tracy Brown, Ray's wife, was Sarah's. "They were so incredibly helpful and encouraging to us. Ray and Tracy walked right beside us. They even came to our custody hearings," recalls Sarah.

Sarah and Manuel got their second chance. Brent was returned to their custody and now they could be a family. "Manuel was determined to keep us together as a family and he worked really hard so that we could get an apartment," says Sarah. "We've been through so much together. He's a good man."

Relief Nursery continued to support the family and Brent was enrolled in the Therapeutic Early Childhood Program. "He thrived there," Sarah says with a smile. "I remember one time the children were learning about good choices and bad choices. That night, I told Brent he needed to pick up his toys - that Momma wasn't going to do it. His response? "That's not my choice." It was so cute (and he ultimately made the right choice). We're really grateful he was able to be in this incredible program."

During Brent's time in the therapeutic classroom, his teachers visited the family in their home every month. "The home visits were very helpful. Kelli, Brent's teacher, even went on walks with me. She was so encouraging. She never made me feel ashamed," recalls Sarah.

Sarah eventually earned her GED at Lane Community College and then her Associates Degree in Human Services. She even did an internship at Relief Nursery, working directly with families experiencing the trauma she had suffered.

Today, Sarah's story is one of success. She works as a Program Coordinator in the Start Smart for Your Baby Program at a local health insurance organization. Manuel works for a conveyor systems company. Brent is in high school. Sarah says he likes to make his own music and enjoys singing and hopes to pursue a career in that field.

Last spring, at the urging of their pastor, Sarah and Manuel shared their story with Brent. "It was hard. Everyone cried," says Sarah. "But Brent cried because he was so overwhelmed at how far we had come. It was a healing moment for all of us."

"Relief Nursery staff was right there when we needed help. I don't believe we would be the family we are today without them. I'm really proud that we broke the cycle of generational abuse. Brent isn't condemned to that life. That's what Relief Nursery does."



We are deeply thankful to Sarah for sharing her family's story – a story of perseverance, of triumph – of healing. A story of a family overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds, with Relief Nursery by their side.

And with you, by our side, Relief Nursery will continue to strengthen families and keep children safe and help them rewrite their future. **Today we call on your sense of generosity, to help us continue this important work.**

Sincerely,

Jim Walsh, President
Relief Nursery Board of Directors

Rory Robison, Vice President
Relief Nursery Board of Directors

P.S. Thank you for your continued support. Private gifts from people like you make up one-third of Relief Nursery's budget. **At Relief Nursery— without question – your gift matters.**