

VIRGINIA TWO GENERATION/ WHOLE FAMILY APPROACH PILOT PROJECT



THE WEATHERLY FAMILY: OVERCOMING INCREDIBLE ODDS DURING THE PANDEMIC

For so many families across Virginia, the negative ripple effects from the pandemic started early and had devastating results. In Southwest Virginia, the Weatherly family – including mom, dad, and a pair of young twins – were among those who found themselves facing overwhelming financial and emotional distress soon after Covid began sweeping through the Narrows community.

At the start of the pandemic, Mrs. Weatherly was disabled due to multiple chronic conditions and had to follow strict isolation and safety protocols. The family suffered a devastating blow when Mr. Weatherly, a certified welder, was laid off from a high paying job at a railroad company. The couple quickly drained their savings and fell behind on all their bills, including their mortgage. Having never been in a situation like the one they were facing, they reached out to social services and found out about the New River Community Action's Whole Family Approach Project. In a little over a month, they began working with a coach to help them find solutions. "The whole world was in crisis mode; we didn't know what we were going to do," says Mrs. Weatherly. "Having another person guide us towards a plan of action was a Godsend at the time."



Narrows, Virginia

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his past is not that bad really helped him. It was so motivating for him, that was the biggest turning point right there."

With the full support of his family and the support of his coaches, Mr. Weatherly was determined in his recovery process, prioritizing his mental and physical health. He worked with the project on building his resume and improving his interview skills. Mrs. Weatherly says the coaches helped them set up and achieve their goals. "The goal setting was mentally the most encouraging. Life will really slam you down - people will always respond to encouragement."

With his physical and mental state growing healthier by the day, an incredible resume, and all his legal and criminal charges dropped, Mr. Weatherly began to believe in himself and had the confidence to pursue his career. In August, he accepted a fantastic new position with full benefits and opportunities for advancement. Mrs. Weatherly says the Whole Family Approach program was invaluable providing vital support to her family during a critical time. "Had we not had the program, we would be homeless," she says. "I mean, it changed everything."

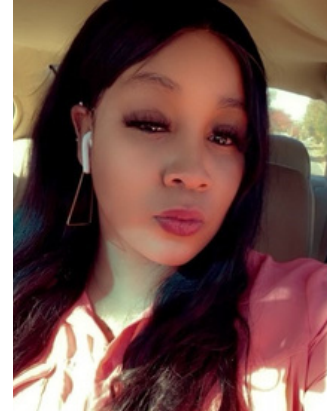
The stress of the situation took its toll however, and in early 2021, Mr. Weatherly fell into addiction and later was arrested for possession. Fortunately, the charges were dropped pending a series of narcotics anonymous meetings, peer support groups and counseling sessions. "For my husband, the biggest turning point was meeting our coach and case manager. Seeing

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JASMINE ARTIS: RISING ABOVE ANY CHALLENGE TO SUPPORT HER FAMILY

For single mom Jasmine Artis, caring for her five children was a daily struggle. As is the case for so many families across Virginia, a long-range plan for a brighter and more secure future seemed overwhelming. Although she had recently secured housing for her family, Jasmine was searching for employment, had no bank account or driver's license, and was finding it challenging to achieve those things. Her life changed dramatically, however, when another parent referred her for The Improvement Association's Whole Family Approach Project in 2020. She reflects on her first impressions of the project, "Everybody was so warm and kind to me. They convinced me that they really wanted to help me. I could hardly believe it because from the time I was a teen, I only believed that people did nice things for me when they wanted something in return."



Jasmine in her new transportation!

"MY COACH NEVER GAVE UP ON ME. WHEN I DIDN'T HAVE A PLAN, SHE HELPED ME TO GET ONE . . . I AM FINALLY A WHOLE PERSON."

As part of the Whole Family Approach Project, Jasmine was eager to learn and be mentored. "I just wasn't happy with myself. My coach, along with the social worker, helped me to gain confidence in myself again. They gave me positive reinforcements, incentives, and praised me for making efforts to better myself." Jasmine enthusiastically participated in all of the course offerings, enrolled in a high school diploma program, found a job, and opened bank accounts.

Eventually Jasmine realized the long hours required by her new position did not allow her to be present for her children. "My coach helped me to update my resume and I remarketed myself for a new position. Within eight weeks, I was able to land a job at more than \$42,000 a year!!! . . . I'm able to be at home with my children every evening!"

Finally, although the program had helped Jasmine utilize services to get to and from work, she knew in order to be truly independent she would need the ability to drive herself. After fulfilling her commitments, The Improvement Association rewarded



Jasmine is an amazing example for her family.

Jasmine with a car, complete with a gigantic red bow! "My life is whole now and I must keep paving the way for my children." She adds, "My coach NEVER gave up on me. When I didn't have a plan, she helped me to get one. When I had no goals for myself, she helped me to seek what was important in my life. They built me past my fears, (my history of) foster care and being a stressed out and overwhelmed mom. I am finally a whole person and so will my children be, too."