

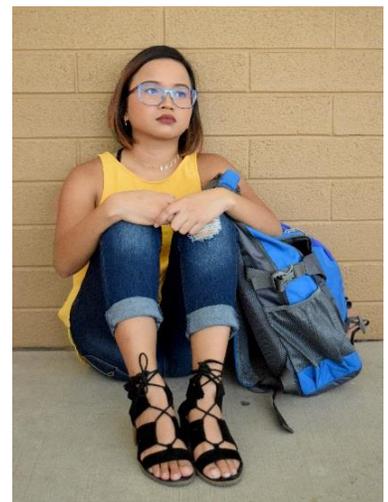
Christine's Story

January 2019

Family...I believe that is the basic nature of every child's dream. Despite the rapid growth of each child, one still hopes to attain a life with a complete family; with a mother whose heart is pure and loving, with a father whose bravery and courage covers the fears of his own children.

Like all other children with similar dreams, I myself wished to have that kind of life. All I wanted was a life where I had a loving mother and a brave father who I could turn to in times of need. However, I was not born with one...unfortunately.

I was born with a broken family in which each family member was thousands of miles apart. As a child, my biological mother and three of my siblings were here in the U.S. while my biological father, my remaining five siblings and I were settled in the Philippines. I grew up with my biological father and moved here to the U.S. at age 11 after meeting my biological mother for the first time.



In the beginning, I was more than excited that I would finally experience the love of a mother since I never experienced it growing up. However, as years passed by, I came to the realization that my dream of a real family would only remain a dream. I went through years of emotional and physical abuse by a mother who, in the beginning, only put on a façade until her true colors finally revealed themselves. I was kicked out at 17 because I did not have enough money to pay my part of the rent.

After bouncing from neighbor to neighbor, I finally reached out to my counselor since my tragic circumstances were affecting my education. My grades were slowly decreasing since I was having difficulty focusing. I lost all motivation, and did not want to attend school anymore. After speaking with my counselor, she introduced me to HYC.

HYC supported my whole being. I was introduced to all the case managers who motivated and supported me in my education. The team behind HYC worked to get me back on my feet by helping me manage my depression as well as helping me move on from my tragic past. By interacting with other students whose situations were similar to mine, through HYC's peer support group, not only was I able to forget my past, but I also had the chance to comfort other students who were suffering as well. Together, we all rose from our tragic pasts and did not let our experiences define who we are.

Most importantly, HYC made a huge contribution into fulfilling my dream. I finally found my family. The Bitterolf family welcomed me into their arms and showed me the true love of a family. I now have a mother whose heart is so pure and loving. I have a father who is so brave and courageous, he will not let anybody look down on me or step on my dreams. Also, I have three older





siblings who each protected me and showed me how special I am to them. From a high school student, whose grades were barely passing and whose attitude was very pessimistic, I have now blossomed into an adult whose smile is brighter than the sun.

I am now in my second year of college with a 4.0 GPA and one of the few students included in the President's Honors List. I am now closer to my goal of attaining a Bachelor's Degree in Cyber Security.

With all the tragic experiences I lived through, with all the depressing emotions I felt, all I can say now is that I am finally happy, living in such a pure bliss of joy. HYC is considered an organization that finds shelters for homeless youth. In my opinion, however, Homeless Youth Connection is more than that. HYC did not find me a house. Instead, they found me what I have always dreamed of. HYC found me a home.

A Note from Dawn Bogart, Executive Director of Homeless Youth Connection

Five years ago, when we started researching housing options for unaccompanied homeless youth in our program, we had no idea the significant and life-changing effect it would have on our students.

Since we implemented the host family program, more than 80 unaccompanied homeless youth have received safe and stable housing. Ninety-nine percent of the seniors have graduated and gone on to college or the military. The program is designed to support education and opportunities for a healthy, self-sufficient future. That was the goal, and we have exceeded our expectations. What we didn't plan on were the lifetime relationships that would develop from this opportunity. Many of our youth have been completely embraced and integrated into their host families. Their bonds will last a life-time.

We are so excited to share Christine's wonderful news with you. On January 7, 2019, she was officially adopted by her host family. She now has a father who will always protect her, a mother who will love her unconditionally and brothers and sisters who will support and encourage her.

Christine's story is one of the more than 2,500 homeless youth that HYC has served. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of our youth.



(Christine with her new family)