

## Success for many at YWCA is achieved in small steps

Malinda has been a resident at the YWCA of Binghamton/Broome County several times. Her first stay didn't last very long. Living with her husband James was not a good situation for either Malinda or their children. Despite the suggestion of the YWCA staff, she left its security to return to her husband, putting herself and her children back into danger.

Last year Malinda was back at the YWCA again as she and her husband had separated due, in a large part, to the mental health issues and developmental disabilities both of them have.

### Return to YWCA Housing

This time, Malinda agreed to a goal-oriented plan in order to stay at the YWCA. She was accepted into the YWCA's Intensive Independent Living Program, which provides semi-permanent housing and services for women ages 19 to 26 and their children. Services in this program include vocational/educational counseling and job training referral.

Malinda's two children were now in foster care and she was pregnant when she arrived at the YWCA this time. While staying at the YWCA, Malinda delivered a very healthy third child, a daughter she named Madison. YWCA staff were with Malinda during her labor and delivery and stayed with her at the hospital all the time she was there.

While in the Intensive Independent Living Program, Malinda continued her education and completed high school requirements through the General Educational Development (GED) testing program, obtained mental health counseling and case management from the Broome County Mental Health Department, and obtained parenting and nutrition education through Cornell Cooperative Extension.



### Supervised Visits With Children

Malinda also was able to have regular supervised visits with her two children in foster care and even developed a strong relationship with the foster mother caring for them.

However, Malinda soon lost custody of Madison, her third child. This was primarily because she would not stay away from the home of her husband James, which was identified by the Broome County Department of Social Services as not being a safe location for either her or the children.

Given Malinda's developmental disabilities and mental health problems, she made great progress while in the Intensive Independent Living Program. Malinda left the program about a year ago, but still keeps in contact with the staff as they are her grounding point and a source of stability in her life. For Malinda, they have become her "second family" which she not only seeks out in time of crisis but also shares her accomplishments with them.

Earlier this year the foster mother adopted Madison and the other two children, but Malinda still is allowed to visit them occasionally. Malinda now has her own apartment and has begun the procedure to divorce her husband. This was a difficult decision for Malinda because they now have a fourth child, Ethan, who was born during the summer. Malinda is determined to keep her new son with her until he is an adult.

### Is This a Success Story?

Because three of her children were adopted by someone else, Malinda's story may not seem to be a successful one. Many young women come to the YWCA with major disabilities and difficulties in their lives. They are able to accomplish great things, although they may not succeed in reversing all of the problems in their lives. Success for them is improving their situation, sometimes in very small steps.

When you donate to United Way's Community Care Fund you support the Intensive Independent Living Program of the YWCA and more than 100 other programs in Broome County that respond to the needs of area residents from infants to senior citizens.

Intensive Independent Living is one of seven programs at the YWCA of Binghamton/Broome County supported by United Way of Broome County.

The others are Adult Housing, Emergency Housing, EncorePlus Breast Care Prevention-Education-Advocacy, Child Care, Fitness, and Transitional Living.

For further information about any of these programs, contact the YWCA, 80 Hawley Street, Binghamton, NY 13901, or call (607) 772-0340.

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**United Way of Broome County, Inc.**

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