Hope. Such a simple word, yet such a vital part of life. We don’t always think of “hope” as a basic need; as essential as food and shelter. But in some ways, it is even more important. Many years ago, the author Orison Swett Marden wrote, “There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something tomorrow.”

At Hopelink, we see that every single day in our centers: hope for something better – from the young single dad who is hopeful there will be food on the table for his son, to the family who have lost everything due to an illness and are fighting to regain stability.

Hope for a better future is a powerful motivator. And perhaps more importantly, without it, many of the other steps necessary for someone to find stability and develop the skills and knowledge they need to exit poverty may never even begin.

I can’t tell you how many times I have heard one of our clients say, “Hopelink gave me hope.” It makes me smile, but it also reminds me we are on the right track in the work we are doing in the community. At every step in the journey, from crisis to stability and then to self-sufficiency, hope is the key that unlocks the next door.

This issue of Reaching Out is filled with stories of people who turned to Hopelink in a time of crisis, in need of hope, in search of a better life. And after getting back on their feet, many of these families and individuals went one step further: they made a commitment to giving back.

Ronald and Renay George and their two children took on the task of supplying one of our new shelter units with everything a new family would need in order to start over. They had found refuge in that very building a few years ago, and wanted to share that hope with another young family.

Ritty So also is giving back; giving free haircuts to Hopelink families at another of our housing sites. Ritty knows what it feels like to be in that situation; how hard it can be to find hope. And she wants people to know someone cares – no matter what they may be going through.

Hope. Without it, a family struggling to make ends meet may never escape poverty. A homeless veteran may never find a place to live. A young mom in crisis may not be able to feed her kids. A senior may not reach out for help keeping the heat on at home.

We talk a lot about the “first step” on the journey toward stability and out of poverty. But believing things can get better always comes first.

“Hopelink gave me hope.” For the many thousands of families and individuals we serve every year, that’s when the journey truly begins.

On behalf of everyone in the Hopelink family, the happiest and most hopeful of holidays to you and your loved ones!

Did you know that last year, Hopelink helped 1,864 people to mitigate crisis and avoid eviction.
There is Always HOPE

For Renay George, remembering what it felt like to live in a station wagon in the dead of winter brings up more than thoughts of bone-chilling cold nights. Looking back also reminds her of the night she very nearly gave up.

“We were driving around and I just kept saying, ‘what are we going to do?’” Renay remembers. “Your mind is so worn out because all you’re thinking about is ‘where am I going to sleep tonight?’ I was praying for a miracle. I didn’t know what else to do.”

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
A few days later, Renay and her husband Ronald and their two young children found their miracle: Hopelink emergency housing in Kenmore. Grateful for warmth and a roof over their heads, Renay was amazed their shelter space was a real apartment – with bedding and dishes and everything needed to start over. The couple immersed themselves in Hopelink programs aimed at helping people exit poverty for good. Both found jobs, they enrolled their son and daughter in school, and they began to get their finances in order. Today, the Georges are totally self-sufficient and settled into their own apartment, and daughter Angel and son Achillis are happy, healthy and active kids.

Renay says the shelter “was a place for stability and grounding; learning tools to succeed. We literally arrived with the clothes on our back, and we left with a million dollars full of knowledge and tools for life.”

This summer, Hopelink reopened the newly renovated and expanded Kenmore Place shelter – the same building Renay described as their “safe haven.” All of the units are fully furnished through donations and Hopelink’s “Adopt a Shelter” program, which is aimed at encouraging community groups to take on an entire unit to ensure that every new family will be able to walk into a home, rather than an empty space.

When the shelter welcomed 11 new families in August, one of those families opened the door to a very special apartment, supplied with not only the tools they would need to live day-to-day, but furnished with love, encouragement and gratitude.

“The George family had taken on the task of purchasing each and every item on the “needed supplies” list – from cookware and towels to soap and toilet paper. Everything a family would need to begin building stability, as they had a few years earlier. It was 12-year-old daughter Angel’s idea – giving back to another family by helping them feel welcome the day they walked in.

“Hopelink wanted us to succeed and we did,” Renay said. “Now it’s our turn to help those families that come through the shelter door. It’s time to show them that regardless of what they have been through, there is hope, and people do care.”

“We’ve been through a lot. But you never forget who is there for you when you’re at your lowest. Hopelink was there for us. They kind of saved my life.”
Although she had worked part-time as a para-educator for six years, Amber was homeless. The single mom of 8-year-old twins was unable to afford adequate housing, and the family was staying with a friend when Amber turned to Hopelink for help. Amber’s Family Development staffer helped her obtain housing assistance through the Landlord Liaison Project so they would have a place to live, and then worked with her on setting and achieving self-sufficiency goals. Over the next year, Amber was able to find another part-time job, get caught up on bills and open a savings account, and find more affordable childcare. Today, Amber is taking steps to purchase her own home!

Simon was unwavering in his commitment to find a job. Hopelink’s English for Work classes helped the young father learn the skills he needed to search for a position, ace the job interview, and succeed in the workforce, and his efforts paid off: Simon landed a job that enables him to provide for his family. “After I applied online, I followed up personally and asked the manager about the job,” he said. “Fortunately I got it. Here I say from my heart thank you all for teaching me – especially for the interview practice.”

Now in their 90s, Gus and Edith’s Social Security income was suddenly no longer enough to make ends meet, and they lost their home to foreclosure. Gus was already facing a number of significant health issues, and the stress of needing to find another place to live was something neither had anticipated. Today, the couple are breathing a little easier; living in an apartment with subsidized rent. Hopelink was able to help with their water bill, and both are looking forward to meeting with Hopelink’s new financial coach to develop the skills they need to make the most out of their limited resources.

Did you know that Hopelink helped 11,315 individuals to keep the heat on in their homes last year.

Donate online at hope-link.org
Gift Rooms

The holidays come alive through the eyes of the children in our lives. Without the new clothing and new toys they receive from Hopelink, many children would have a disappointing holiday.

All the new gifts Hopelink receives are distributed through Hopelink’s five centers in December. Parents and grandparents are able to “shop” for toys for the children in their families. Smaller items such as stuffed animals and stocking stuffers are also included. Gifts suitable for teenagers are especially needed this year.

If you are considering donating to the gift room this year, please remember that all toys, games and other gift donations should be new and unused. All gifts should come to the center unwrapped. Every child should have the opportunity to open a brand new gift and be excited that they are the very first to have it. This is especially important because, more often than not, their gifts and clothes usually come from second-hand stores. This may be the only time during the year when a child is receiving something new. They will remember this holiday with joy for years to come.

Gift Suggestions

- Books and games for all ages
- Toys for all ages
- Clothing
- Books and games for all ages

Tribute Donations

Give a gift to honor someone close to you on a special occasion. Hopelink will send a card acknowledging your thoughtful donation to the person of your choice.

Go to www.hope-link.org and click on “donate”. This is a popular idea for teachers, coaches, and scout leaders. A memorial gift to Hopelink is another way to remember loved ones who have passed away. A gift in their honor supporting a cause they cared about carries on their legacy.
What Your Donation Buys

Your gift makes a real and immediate difference for families and individuals in need.

For every dollar contributed by individuals, foundations and businesses, Hopelink leverages an additional two dollars from the public sector. A pledge that can be paid over the next year, or a donation matched by your employer, further increases Hopelink’s ability to serve families, seniors and people with disabilities. There are four ways to make a cash donation:

1. online at www.hope-link.org
2. by phone, just call 425.869.6000
3. by mail to: Hopelink, P.O. Box 3577, Redmond, WA 98072-3577
4. in-person at any of our five centers

For more information about hosting a food or holiday gift drive, contact Jennifer at jdreyfuss@hope-link.org

Hopelink has five centers where you can take your donations:

BELLEVUE
425.943.7555
14812 Main St.
Bellevue, WA 98007

KIRKLAND/NORTHSHORE
425.889.7880
11011 120th Ave. NE
Kirkland, WA 98033

REDMOND
425.882.0241
16725 Cleveland Street
Redmond, WA 98052

SNO-VALLEY
425.333.4163
31957 E. Commercial St.
Carnation, WA 98014

SHORELINE
206.440.7300
15809 Westminster Way N.
Shoreline, WA 98133

Centers are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM. Sno-Valley is closed on Fridays.

Check www.hope-link.org for special holiday hours.

Food Banks

Hopelink’s five food banks collectively serve thousands of individuals and families each year. This year, Hopelink will serve a growing number of families and seniors with holiday foods in addition to the regular staples they normally receive. In order to ensure that the holiday season is memorable for everyone, we need help from the community with food donations.

Our greatest needs are for foods people generally use at this time of year such as:

- Cooking oil
- Canned pumpkin
- Flour
- Stuffing
- Sugar
- Salad dressing
- Gravy mix
- Boxed or instant
- Baking items & mixes
- Potatoes

We also need traditional nonperishable items used year-round, such as:

- Canned tuna fish
- Soup
- Pasta and rice
- Canned vegetables
- Cereal
- Juice
- Canned fruit
- Canned meals (i.e., chili, stew, and ravioli); beans
- & tomato products
- or lentils
- Peanut butter
- Canned meals (i.e., chili, stew, and ravioli); beans
- or lentils

If your group is planning to organize a food drive for the holidays, contact the Hopelink center closest to you. The Hopelink staff will ensure you have everything you need to make it a successful collection event. Each center offers specific foods based on the cultures of the clients who are served there and what the center is able to purchase through monetary donations.

Did you know that

In the past year, Hopelink provided 1,587,604 trips for people requiring non-emergent medical services.
Paying for his mother’s funeral expenses was not something James expected to have to take on while he was focused on finishing his college education. The young single dad was already on a tight budget as he worked toward a better future, and in the midst of his grief, James struggled to pay his rent and afford text books on top of the burial costs. Hopelink helped James with rental assistance and also gave him a referral for help buying the necessary books – enabling James to stay on track and have one less hurdle as he worked through the grieving process.

Martin was hungry and homeless the day he found Hopelink. He was relieved that he qualified for the food bank, but more than anything, Martin wanted to work. Homelessness – living without a phone or a mailing address – had made it very tough to apply for jobs. That day, a Hopelink staffer helped Martin set up a phone message line through Solid Ground, and also referred him to our employment program. While waiting in the lobby, Martin looked through a binder of job announcements, happened to see a listing that matched his experience, and used the office phone to set up an in-person interview with the employer. Martin never met with the Hopelink employment specialist … a week later, he came back to announce he’d gotten the job.

Marina’s husband had always provided for the family, so when he suddenly passed away late last year, Marina struggled to make ends meet. She was in danger of having her power shut off when a food bank volunteer at Hopelink’s Bellevue Center suggested that Marina apply for energy assistance to help with her heating bills. Understandably distressed, Marina showed up for her energy appointment without the necessary documents. Fortunately, the Hopelink staffer she met with was able to reassure her and help her track down the required information. Within a week, Marina had the assistance she needed – and one less thing to worry about during her time of grief.
Undergoing dialysis three times a week was challenging enough, but Rosemary – who lives in a senior center in Kenmore – also had to rely on public transit for her visits. She was grateful for Access services but struggled with the timing. Dialysis caused Rosemary to feel ill afterward, and waiting two hours for a ride home was taking a toll. Judy, one of Hopelink’s Getting Around Puget Sound volunteers, suggested other community transportation options – including volunteer transportation programs operated by Senior Services and Eastside Friends of Seniors – that would enable Rosemary to get home more quickly. Thanks to a caring Hopelink volunteer, Rosemary is now able to focus on her health, rather than stressing about reliable transportation.

A single mom of 7-year-old twins, Jamila hadn’t worked in a number of years when she turned to Hopelink for help getting back on her feet. After initially visiting the food bank and also receiving school supplies, Jamila was referred to Hopelink’s Family Development and Employment Programs. The young mom was a domestic violence survivor with a lot of volunteer and DV advocacy experience, and Jamila was hopeful she would be able to parlay her volunteer work into a paying job. Her focus and drive paid off: Within two months, Jamila’s Hopelink Employment Specialist helped her land a paid internship – with benefits – as a receptionist. Hopelink also helped Jamila and her daughters find safe housing. Today, Jamila is a pillar of her community and a beacon of hope for other single mothers who are working to rebuild their lives.

Elena was living a happy, stable life in El Salvador – until the day her life was threatened by two armed gang members. Terrified, she and her 8-year-old son found asylum in the United States, and Elena wasted no time getting back on her feet. Hopelink provided the young family with a safe, secure place to live and the stability they needed to start a new life, and today, Elena is working full time and she and her now 12-year-old son live in their own apartment. She is hoping to return to college and to someday own her own home. Far from the turmoil of her homeland, Elena is excited about her future.
Ritty So still has the baby blanket she received at the hospital four years ago when she gave birth to her daughter. She was homeless. Today, that tattered blanket serves as a reminder that Ritty’s darkest days are behind her. But back then, when she and her two children moved into Hopelink housing within days of her daughter’s birth, the tiny blanket was literally all she had.

The young family’s journey out of homelessness didn’t end the day they finally had a roof over their heads. In fact, it had only begun. After moving into the shelter, Ritty worked hard to get back on her feet, regularly meeting with her Hopelink Family Development case manager to make a plan of action that would enable her to exit poverty for good.

For Ritty, that meant building a foundation on which she could pursue her dream of becoming a hair stylist. Ritty worked hard, went to school, stayed focused. One step at a time, she walked away from poverty and homelessness toward stability and self sufficiency – and ultimately into a new life with a solid career that she loves.

Today, far from the day she entered Hopelink housing with only a baby blanket to her name, Ritty is giving back. She still remembers what it felt like to live on hope alone; never certain what tomorrow might bring. So today, Ritty regularly provides free haircuts to Hopelink clients at one of our shelters.

“Those are my people,” Ritty said. “I know what that’s like … what it feels like. It makes me happy to help them feel better for a little while.”
Hopelink’s mission is to promote self-sufficiency for all members of our community; we help people make lasting change.

Credits
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For more than 44 years, Hopelink has served homeless and low-income families, individuals, children, seniors and people with disabilities. Hopelink services include food, shelter, housing for homeless families, homelessness prevention, family development, transportation, adult literacy and employment services.

For more information about Hopelink and its services, call 425.869.6000 or visit the website at hope-link.org.

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Donate online at hope-link.org

Join our social network to get all the latest news about Hopelink’s programs.
For more than 44 years, your support has helped Hopelink expand its critical social services to at-risk families and individuals in our region. Our approach – providing stability and the skills needed to exit poverty – continues to move tens of thousands of people from vulnerability and crisis toward independence.