

THIS IS OUR STORY...

In 2002, First Steps Housing Project Inc. (First Steps) opened its doors to pregnant and parenting young women who had no safe place to live. Young, single women and their children represent the single largest group of people living in poverty in Saint John, and they are likely to have become pregnant as teens, experienced broken homes or abusive situations and have ongoing coping or life skill challenges. These women are unlikely to finish high school, citing personal problems as their primary reason for dropping out, including pregnancy. These statistics are alarming, and indicate that the personal safety and security of these young mothers and their infants is in jeopardy.

First Steps was developed in Saint John because of the high teen pregnancy rate and the lack of support facilities for young women and their babies. These mothers and their children are in jeopardy of poverty, addiction, illness and abuse. The aim of First Steps is to provide a supportive transitional housing facility for pregnant young women and their children. First Steps strives to ensure that young women who have no safe place to live will have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby; and through partnering with existing community services will assist these young women in moving towards self-sufficiency and a better quality of life.

First Steps provides a supportive environment where young mothers can continue their education, further their personal development and gain the skills required to thrive as individuals and as parents.

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THIS IS MITCHELLE'S STORY...

When I was 12 years old I lost both my parents. At this point my aunt adopted me and we moved from Kenya to Canada when I was 16. This was a hard transition for me; I didn't know any English and the situation with my aunt got worse and I was sent to live in a group home. This was much safer for me. I was happy again and able to graduate high school, but at 19 I had to leave the group home. From that point on I stayed with friends. My life completely changed one day when my friends and I decided to take a trip to Saint John. While there, I had a falling out with the friends I had traveled there with. They left me. I knew no one. I was scared and alone. Not knowing what to do, I felt helpless. It was at this rock bottom point for me that I had made a decision to try and end my life. I felt I had no other choice and nowhere to turn. It was while at the hospital that I found out I was pregnant. I was scared and in shock. Immediately after it sunk in that I was not only alone, but stranded at the hospital with nowhere to go, and pregnant. It was the social worker at the hospital who had told me about a place called First Steps. A place for someone like me, a place for someone who is alone, scared and pregnant. First Steps made me feel safe again. If it wasn't for First Steps I don't know where I would be. First Steps has helped with more than providing a safe place for me to live; they did more than they'll ever know by helping me change my name back. Being able to share the last name of my parents once again truly allows me to feel connected with them again. I'm proud that I am now able to pass on my parents name to my daughter. I miss my family and my life in Kenya but I am happy to say that I have found a family in First Steps.

Please think of me, my baby and others like us when making your donation to First Steps. We all thank you!

THIS IS JILLIAN'S STORY...

Before I was pregnant, I didn't exactly have a stable lifestyle. I was constantly moving from place to place and in and out of school. When I became pregnant, I wanted better for my daughter because she was my first priority. I realized that the unhealthy relationship I was in and my living circumstances were not an environment for a child to be in. I made the decision the day I moved in to First Steps that I wanted a better life for my daughter and myself. Thanks to First Steps I am graduating from their high school and going to College or University in the fall. They have given me the great opportunity to finish my education and go on. I have also developed a more stable and structured lifestyle. I am no longer stressed about wondering what will happen next. First Steps is also providing me with housing through their Apartment Program so I can finish my education. Without First Steps I am not sure what my life would look like, but it wouldn't be good, that's for sure. They have given me the opportunity to pursue my goals and have a successful future and I am so grateful.

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THIS IS SALYSSA'S STORY...

It started with just for pleasure, something new to do. At first I thought I could handle it. Then I realized drugs were taking over my life and the chance to be the great mother I could be. I have two handsome boys Donovan and Larry that I lost to the crappy decisions that I made in my life. I recently was pregnant with my last little guy and vowed to do better because I can not handle mentally losing another child. When it came time to have my little guy, I thought it would be just like the rest of my deliveries, easy. Well after giving birth, I woke in the ICU and found out I almost bled to death. After having to get multiple blood transfusions and being in the OR twice and still alive, I honestly believe that the Lord is not done with me. It opened my eyes and made me want to do better for myself and my little guy. So leaving the hospital and going back to the life I was living and the bad decision I had made wasn't something I was going to do. I left that part of Saint John and found my way to First Steps to make the right and healthy choices for myself and Stryker my 4 month old son. The staff at First Steps are here for mothers and children that are ready to do better in our lives. Thank you, and I hope for the sake of other mothers and children, First Steps will be here for the right steps we make in our lives for a long time.

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THIS IS DINAH'S STORY...

I remember the day the first day I came to First Steps for my interview. I met with a woman who talked to me about being young and pregnant and what supports there were for me in the community. At this time I was really scared and was not at all ready to be a mom. She told me I could come and live at First Steps and take the time to decide if I wanted to be a mom or maybe think about adoption. I decided to stay at First Steps to face the decisions of this pregnancy. When I moved in, three months pregnant, I hadn't even held a baby before. As the time went by I began to fall in love with the children and the nurturing mothers. I had decided to keep my wonderful gift. My child has changed my life; my pregnancy introduced me to First Steps which opened an uncountable amount of doors for education, parenting information and overall bettering of mine and my child's life. They have given me my high school diploma through the Dr. Christine Davies Education Centre, which has given me the chance to go to UNBSJ to pursue my dream of becoming a pharmacist. I also received over \$3000 in bursaries from them which has really helped with my books and day care costs. They offered me self-esteem and parenting courses in order to better myself, to make a healthier life for my child. First Steps was there for me through the first year of my daughter Alana's life, this was a hard time for me. I unfortunately do not do well with sleep deprivation and with a touch of post partum depression on top, I don't think I could have done it by myself. I am now a wonderful mother and in the First Steps Apartment Program, in university, and well on my way to success. Thank you, to all of you who support this needed program.

Please think of me, my baby and others like us when making your donation to First Steps. We all thank you!