

Success Stories . . .

Rockford MELD

HEATHER'S STORY

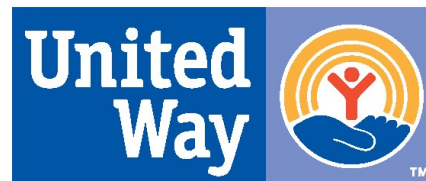
"Okay. This is my third pregnancy test. There is no way this test will come out positive." I thought to myself as I waited to see what sign was going to appear. "Here we go, I see a...negative sign and now...its...its official a plus sign once again! All right Heather, what are you going to do? Let's look at your options... adoption or I could raise the child myself...hmmm, but which one is for me? How am I going to tell my parents? I know they will not be happy with this news. If I keep the baby how do I go to school, work and love the child? Will I even be a good mother?" Thoughts and questions came flooding to my mind as I realized I was pregnant. "Heather, focus here, just breathe. You can get through this, but where do I start?"

I remember the day I figured out I was pregnant. The day my heart sank into my stomach, because I realized life was about ready to change and I had a decision to make. A decision I had never made before nor knew how to even handle or understand the ramifications of which option I should choose.

A couple weeks later I finally sat my parents down and informed them of the news. We will just say, not the happiest of parents. My parents decided to handle this situation with what I refer to as "tough love". They gave me a few months to find my own place to live and told me that I needed to learn responsibility of the adult world. This frightened me. Up until this point I had always depended on them for all the essentials and now I had to do it all on my own while carrying an unborn child. Lucky for me I had a friend who mentioned Rockford MELD as a place to start.

At first I was nervous to call and ask strangers for help. (If you know me well I am not one to ask for help. Instead, I am stubborn and I prefer to do everything on my own.) To my surprise MELD welcomed me into their arms by providing a place to live. MELD offered work opportunities, they taught me how to manage money, directed me to programs that assisted with daycare and food expenses and time to interact with other girls dealing with the same questions and fears I had. I finally felt I had found a place where I could be the greatest mom and had the confidence that I could continue towards my goals in life.

During my pregnancy, I decided to try to complete as much college courses in 9 months while holding down a full time position at a bank. Once Tylar was born I continued to work full time, but only attended school part time. (continued on the next page)



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Today Tylar is 5 and is just overly excited to attend Kindergarten at Ellis Arts Academy. Tylar's father, Jason and I were married in September of 2002 and we are enjoying all the wonderful ups and downs new couples experience in their first years of marriage.

I am currently working part-time as Administrative Coordinator for On The Waterfront, Inc. and as lead designer for my church, Bethesda Covenant Church, while pursuing a Graphic/Web Design degree at Rock Valley College. my creative talents within the bulletin and Sunday service. I love working at The Waterfront because I get to see how an entire city comes together for a weekend of music and food. I am especially impressed with how many



non-profits in the area benefit from the Labor Day weekend celebration. I also enjoy working at Bethesda because the church allows me to share my creative talents within the bulletin and Sunday service.

This summer I wanted to provide members a chance to partner with several non-profits in the Rockford area and make an impact within our community. Our first group we wanted to impact was MELD. As a church we had 38 participants to the annual July 4th MELD Run and Walk fundraiser! Second, we took up a collection for undergarments for all children in our school district through the MAPS program and were able to help dress several hundred children. Finally, at this moment our church and several other local churches are helping John Nelson School with updating and renovating their school for their 100th year anniversary celebration in October.

During this summer I was continually amazed at how willing people were in stepping up to help those in need. As I am sitting here writing to you and I am looking back on the time I spent living at MELD I have come to the realization that MELD is not only a place of support and opportunities, but MELD is a second family. A family, who only wants to love each young mom and help her in becoming a successful mother and adult. I know without MELD's family I personally would not have had such a positive experience during my pregnancy and the first months with my son, Tylar. MELD gave me hope that I can still follow to conquer my dreams and goals while being a young mother. I wish a thank you could be enough to say what MELD has done, is doing and will continue to do for pregnant and parenting young families, but than you is not enough. I can only encourage one to volunteer time with all the amazing young ladies and staff members so that you can experience MELD's love first hand.

Thank you MELD. Heather A.



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