



Participant Spotlight - Meet Elizabeth

As a young child, I didn't realize we were poor. I thought food banks, paper food stamps, and government block cheese was the normal for all households. I thought fights and arguments happened within every child's home, and not just my own.

In school, I always wanted the items other children had, but remember Goodwill shopping for second hand, and school supplies that we crossed the previous owners name off of.

After foster care, I continued down the same road because the opportunity to raise myself never really seemed to be in reach. I had always heard about other individuals being chosen for aid, or community support, but I was never that "lucky".

Then in 2020 my parents passed, and I moved from Albany Georgia, to a small very quiet, (in comparison) town called McMinnville.

I got a job at first in Lebanon, TN, but the drive was too much for 7 days a week, no time with my family. I then started back at Waffle House in town. This let me meet many people, and lead to me going to First United Methodist Church on Wednesday nights for family dinner and activities. This was in lieu of me applying for a program that was a pilot program called "Empower". Empower was finding its path and I was too. Being a part of this program provided a meal every Tuesday night, which helps as a single mom, followed by planning and connections along the way for personal growth.

Empower had pastor Ryan Heatherly, from FUMC, do some financing classes. These classes lead to talks of change and growth. Through interacting with my Empower group, I began to network, and grow. During this journey Empower aided me with a college course I couldn't afford that semester. Empower also helped me by using my lived experience as a guide for finding jobs that would better not only my family, but my belief in myself.

Empower sent me a job listing for a CPRs within their own company, I followed the link and applied. Within a couple of weeks I had done my interview and was given a start date! I now help others find their own paths when the world seems dark! Thanks to Empower, I not only have a job that I value, but I also have completed my bachelors in human services, graduated on Honor Roll, and have been able to be a member of change throughout the community.

Sometimes all it takes is a community, a program, a group of people who believe in change, and that same group believing in you!

Always:
Elizabeth Bryanna Nelson

