



BETTER TOGETHER

THIS IS MY UNITED WAY

by Corinne Marcou

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Our story starts 23 years ago when my then husband and I relocated to the Monadnock Region. At the time, our son was two; a year later, our daughter was born. After being a stay at home mom for two years, I began working part time.

When our kids were 6 and 9, we divorced, and I was faced with raising two young kids alone. Needless to say, our world was flipped upside down. The comfort that our children knew was gone, and I was faced with providing those basic needs of housing, food, and heat for my family. As you can imagine, there were plenty of "no's", not because I was being strict, though I'm sure my kids would say different, but more because there wasn't extra for the "yes's", even with a full-time job.

Life was tough, but we buckled down. Luxuries were cancelled; the heat was turned down—and an extra layer of clothing and blankets were added. Life for those first few years was lean, but we were okay.

Then the recession of 2008 hit and I lost my full time job. Like so many others, I was faced with the deeper struggle of providing those basic needs. Luckily for me, and many others, there is help in our community. Southwestern Community Services was there for fuel and electric assistance and The Community Kitchen for food. As anyone with teenagers will understand, there is never enough food. The help from the Kitchen was welcomed!

I feel very fortunate that I was unemployed for only 6 months. I'm happy to say I've been with the City of Keene for the past 12 years!

In 2015, I accepted the role of Loaned Employee (LE) for the Monadnock United Way (MUW). Until then, I never gave the United Way any thought. During this time, I discovered that many of my co-workers had also reached out and received services from local agencies for a variety of reasons. These ranged from heating and electric assistance from Southwest Community Services to support services for their newborns from Rise...for baby and family. Many expressed how their families had benefited from these agencies and how important it is to them that they donate, as they understand how vital these services are to our community.

Walking into The Community Kitchen for a site visit during LE training was emotional (bringing back many memories), as were the expressions of gratitude I heard. It was then I realized how much MUW affected my life. No longer did I feel ashamed for the assistance I received. Our local agencies are here every day, for everyday people like me, people who want to work, work hard and are committed to making the life of their families better.

Like my co-workers and others who reach out for assistance, I'm not anyone special and I'm not alone. There are many who struggle to make ends meet or who need assistance for a short time. But thanks to the generous people in our community, MUW is there, because you never know when you'll need a helping hand.



www.muw.org