

Pregnant and homeless, woman gets help she needs

By [Mary McCarty](#)

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Chandie Dow was sleeping in her truck when she found out she was pregnant. "Oh my God, what am I going to do?" she asked herself.

"When I didn't have my period, I was hoping it was just stress," she recalled. "The timing for this is horrible. But this is a gift from God, and you have to take that for what it is."

She displayed the same cheerful spirit at the Sleep Out and Speak Out for the Homeless event at the St. Vincent de Paul Hotel on Wednesday night, Nov. 19. Dow spoke before a crowd of advocates for the homeless who were preparing to sleep out in the cold that night. "I can finally see a future, because of this place," she said. "And the future is bright."

The baby bump on her stick-thin frame seemed to belie her words. Homeless, seven months pregnant — and the future looks bright?

For many of us, the future seems bleak because we're cutting back on Christmas this year.

I couldn't imagine being in Dow's situation and not being depressed. I couldn't imagine Dow's situation, period. Pregnancy should be a time when you're preoccupied with picking colors for your baby's room, not worrying about a roof over your head.

Two years ago, Dow herself couldn't have imagined her current predicament. Her second husband had a steady job at IBM. But they separated in August 2007, and Dow moved to Denver to care for her mother, who has multiple sclerosis. Her 14-year-old son from her first marriage was living with her.

Dow felt compelled to follow her first husband to the Dayton area after he won primary custody of their son. "It felt terrible to me, knowing someone thought I wasn't able to take care of my son," she said. "He was living with my mom, he had food in his stomach, a roof over his head. He had everything he needed, but I didn't have an income."

She said not being near him wasn't an option: "My son and I have always been very close and I need to be near him. He's a great kid and he's doing well in school."

This time, she's having a girl she plans to name Jazmine. She talks to the baby all the time, reassuring her that "you and I are going to make it through this. People are willing to help and Mommy's not always going to be living like this."



Dow's pregnancy is considered high-risk because of four past miscarriages. She soon will be placed in respite care housing through the Samaritan Homeless Clinic. That will allow her to go on bed rest — a near impossibility with some 40 roommates at St. Vincent's. "There's the stereotype of homeless people being on drugs or alcohol, but there are a lot of really good people here in a bad situation. I have never been arrested and I have no problem with drugs or alcohol. I know I've got it within me to get where I need to be. I don't need a handout, but I do need a hand up."

She knows she has come to the right place, alternating her days between St. Vincent's and The Other Place daytime homeless shelter. "I've gotten nothing but caring and kindness from these people," she said.

"They make sure I have enough to eat, and they make sure I take care of myself and my baby."

I asked if she had any family in town, besides her son.

Dow shook her head sadly, then reconsidered as she looked around her: "The only family I have is right here."

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