



Your generosity helped this unlikeliest of guests

Yvonne is a former Salvation Army officer who worked with the poor. An LPN who spent decades caring for others. A veteran of two medical mission trips. And a committed Christian.

Simply put, Yvonne is the last person you'd expect to find at the Sparrow's Nest. But that's exactly where this self-described "61-years-young" woman found herself in Fall 2008.

"I was at the lowest point in my life," she explains. "I injured my knee on the job and was unable to return to work. I'd made an unwise marriage in 2004 that fell apart. I had great financial difficulties."

Yvonne lost everything she had—including her retirement money—trying to honor her debts, and fell into major clinical depression. About to lose her mobile home, she told her sons she'd soon have to go to a homeless shelter. But none of them offered help.

"It was like my sons couldn't see me in this state," she stresses. "I'd always been the person who fixed everything. They were in denial." Feeling abandoned and despairing for her life, she took the bus to Rescue Crisis, the first stop in the journey that led her to the Nest.

"Coming to the Nest was humbling," recalls Yvonne. "The first two weeks were the hardest, especially when a lady came in to do the Bible study. She and I used to go to an inner city church together, but I was the one doing the

Bible study. Now I was a client of the Sparrow's Nest. Our eyes engaged, and I felt such shame. But she came over and gave me a hug.

"I realized the homeless must experience shame all the time. I said, 'God, apparently this is Your will. There's something for me to learn through this struggle.'"

Given her attitude, it's not surprising that it took Yvonne just a few months to achieve the goals she set for herself with the help of the Nest staff. With assistance from Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority, Job and Family Services, and Social Security disability, she left the Sparrow's Nest last December and has been on her own ever since.

Today, while she awaits knee replacement surgery, Yvonne attends Good Shepherd Catholic Church, volunteers with the blind, mentors a 39-year-old mentally challenged woman, and is taking part in a 10-month Servant Leadership program to determine how to best serve the Lord.

She says that her experience at the Nest taught her how to be grateful and increased the depth of her ability to love, noting that even her relationship with her sons worked out.

"I think there's a better version of myself now for having been at the Nest," she contends. "To Cherry Street donors, I'd say, 'There are all walks of life at the Nest. Keep giving because the need is very great.'"

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