

# Breaking the Cycle

1 in 5 homeless individuals in Whatcom County is a child under age 10\*

# 1 in 5

Jackie was twenty-one, living on the streets, and addicted to heroin when she found out that she was pregnant. Homeless from the time she was thirteen, she had been in and out of treatment centers and powerless against her addiction. The pregnancy created an in-road to reconciliation with her estranged mother, and with her support, and the motivation of the getting clean for her unborn child, Jackie once again sought treatment. Baby Brayden was born in January of 2013. Jackie was given strict rules and requirements from CPS, and her mother, on how to care for the new baby and maintain her sobriety. But the pull of the streets, and the dark, familiar addiction began to slowly take hold. "I started using again when Brayden was four months old, and my mom kicked me out. I left him there because I knew where I was going, and I was not going to take him there with me." Brayden stayed with Jackie's mother, and she went back to the streets, and back to her familiar habits.

When Brayden was a year old, Jackie found out she was pregnant again, and again she reached out for help. Knowing it was the only chance for the baby, she called a local program for pregnant mothers every single day until a bed opened up. Jackie began a six-month inpatient treatment program for pregnant and parenting mothers and Brayden went into foster care. While in treatment, Jackie gave birth to a baby girl, Kaydence, who was also placed in the foster care system. Jackie knew that she would have to make a lasting change if she was to ever see her children again. She took on her sobriety, enrolling in and attending all available classes at her treatment center. Determined to put her life together and get her children back, she also participated in services through agencies like Opportunity Council. "While I was in treatment there were classes and case management; things that could help me move forward in my life. It wasn't that I just wanted to look good for CPS, I needed the help. I needed to learn how to live a normal life and move forward."

*continued inside -->*



**Lydia**  
**PLACE**

*every family deserves a home*

--continued from the cover

Jackie moved to Lydia Place's transitional housing program in the Fall of 2014 with her then eight-month-old daughter, Kaydence. She found stability there, giving CPS the confidence to reunite her with then eighteen-month-old Brayden. Their reconciliation was bittersweet, tempered by Brayden's attachment to his foster parents and the time he had spent separated from his mother. "It was hard at first because Brayden was really quiet and the only experience I'd had with Brayden, other than as a baby, was when his foster parents brought him to visit me at the treatment center. The first night he was with me I had him in the baby carrier on my back while I cooked dinner, because the ladies that had him said that he liked to be comforted that way. I carried him in the carrier all night long."

Painfully, Jackie realized that her addiction and separation from Brayden had meant something she hadn't expected. "I didn't see him from the time he was five months old until he was one because I was trying to not affect his life with my addiction, but I was also affecting him by not being there."

Brayden's emotional growth, speech and behavior were largely delayed, likely a consequence of the trauma of separation and instability he experienced in his first year. "When he first came to stay with me he didn't talk at all. He didn't know how to express himself. And he began acting aggressive. I even remember him figuring out how to open the dishwasher, finding the knives, and running through the house with them. It was hard." Without support, many children who experience early trauma and adversity have struggles that follow them into adulthood. "We see the negative consequences of these childhood struggles passed from one generation to the next in a cycle; a cycle perpetuated by a lack of resources. Early intervention is critical, and it works." Says Katie Goger, Parent Support Specialist at Lydia Place.

Brayden, however, is not going to be a part of that cycle. With the help of the new Lydia Place Parent Support Program, case managers, weekly children's groups, speech therapists, and partner agency programs, Brayden is on his way to catching up with his toddling peers. Jackie recounts, "At first he (Brayden) didn't want to play with other kids or leave my room. Then we started meeting with a new speech therapist. From those appointments and meetings with Katie (Lydia Place Parent Support Specialist), he really started coming out of his shell."

On September 25, 2015, exactly one year after Jackie moved into the transitional housing program at Lydia Place, she, Brayden, and Kaydence moved to their own home. Jackie was approved for an apartment in Lydia Place's Supportive Service Program, a partnership with Bellingham Housing Authority, and she and the children are beginning to establish their new routine. "I have to unpack, and I have appointments, and I try to remember to check my mailbox...but I'm glad I have my own place. It's the perfect size for us; it's comfortable. I've never had my own place before." The children, particularly Brayden, are beginning to recognize and find comfort in their new apartment. "As soon as we turn the corner at the street, Brayden's says "Going home? Going home? We home? Home? Home?" It makes me really happy to hear that. He knows this is home."

Brayden continues to meet with his speech therapist, attends weekly meetings with his mother and Lydia Place case manager- Alyssum Wyss, and twice-monthly meetings with Lydia Place Parent Support Specialist- Katie Goger. Lydia Place will remain a critical part of the young family's plan to maintain stability and ensure their long-term success. Jackie states, "I started using drugs when I was really young so I consider this me starting out my life for the first time. It's like being born again. I've never done anything responsible, you know, so from the time I moved into Lydia Place until now, this is the longest that I have not been homeless since I was thirteen years old. I have my kids and my CPS case was dismissed."

**"Everything that's happened to me since I moved into Lydia Place, to me it is the first of anything that's ever happened for me. This is like living for the first time."**

Lydia Place is committed to ensuring that homeless individuals, families, and children like Brayden and his sister have every opportunity to break the cycle of poverty and achieve their dreams. Executive Director, Emily O'Connor, sees its role very clearly. "This is a problem we know how to solve; early intervention and support are critical for our young families. If we do the right thing now, and invest in our little ones, research shows us that we can, and will, change the course of their lives and the lives of generations to follow."



October, 2015 - Kaydence, Brayden, & Jackie at their new home

# Join Us. Make a Difference.

**A call to action ~ from Emily O'Connor**



**Emily O'Connor**  
Executive Director, Lydia Place

"2015 was a very exciting and ambitious year for Lydia Place. In January, we launched the Parent Support Program, hired our first Parent Support Specialist, and implemented Parents as Teachers, a home visiting program with 30 years of proven success at changing the lives of children. We expanded our Family Services Program in July, building additional capacity to serve homeless families with children. We underwent major rehabilitation of our beloved Transitional Housing Facility, made possible by Home Fund dollars through the City of Bellingham. Before the year is out, we will have purchased a piece of property with our sister agency, Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services, dedicated to increasing emergency and permanent housing for homeless women and those fleeing domestic violence. In 2016, we will continue to expand services, develop creative partnerships, stretch our resources, and push the bar higher.

As a community, we are making progress. Homelessness is a problem with a solution, it's a solvable equation. We can end homelessness as we know it today. We can do this, together. It's a simple matter of math, a matter of balancing the equation. With your help we will accomplish our goal."

On any given night

**OVER 200**

individuals in our community sleep on our streets, cars, or abandoned buildings.

Tonight

**OVER 80**

families with children are homeless in our community.

Our waiting list is a mile long, a mile that stretches through

**400**

households.

**Your contribution today, gets us one step closer to balancing the equation.**

## Your Gift Matters

**\$5000** Provides a full year of housing and support for a homeless family.

**\$1000** Provides a month of services for a mom and children in our Transitional Housing Program.

**\$750** Provides a week of emergency housing for a family of three in the Family Services Program.

**\$300** Provides four in-home parent/child sessions in our Parent Support Program.

**\$100** Provides a week of Case Management in any of our Lydia Place programs.

**\$25** Provides a night of safe shelter for a child.

**DONATION ENVELOPE INCLUDED OR GO ONLINE TO [LYDIAPLACE.ORG](http://LYDIAPLACE.ORG)**

**Together, we can end homelessness in our community.  
Thank you for being a part of the solution!**



I support Lydia Place because they are making real change for homeless individuals and families in our community. **Join me. Make a contribution. Volunteer. Speak up. Ending homelessness takes all of us.**

- Ryan Thramer, Owner, Innovations For Quality Living

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