

CCS/CHS King County

The Story Page

Stories of Hope and Healing

Helping Families Build Futures

Lilly Kaminaga and Skip Anitok left the Marshall Islands eight years ago to build a better future for their children. "Back home, we could only get work for 2-3 hours a day. This was not enough. We wanted more for ourselves and our kids."

After sojourns in Arkansas and Oregon, the family moved to South King County, where Skip found a job at Sea-Tac airport. The loss of shared living quarters in the fall of 2021 found Skip and Lilly sleeping in their car while their two sons bunked with one of Skip's coworkers. Determined that their children would always sleep under a roof, Lilly had already sent their two-year-old daughter, Rosie, to live with her sister in Oregon.

According to Lilly, "Skip and I knew it would be hard, but we kept looking for a place for our whole family. I called many places and could not get an answer. That's when we found Sacred Heart Shelter (SHS). They were so welcoming!"

SHS itself was in the middle of transition. A COVID outbreak at their former site in Seattle, a convent in Queen Anne, meant Lilly's family of four had to share a single room in a transitional shelter in Kent designed for single adults. Still, SHS staff found a way to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas with resident parents and children. Finally, the family moved into one of ten units at the shelter's final location, refurbished motel-style housing in Kent, Washington.

While SHS strives to place families in permanent housing as soon as possible, Julie Thompson, SHS Resource Manager, reports that it is very challenging to find housing for a single-income family, even one like Lilly's, uncomplicated by barriers like debt or warrants.

This spring, CCS Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Program intervened, providing short-term financial assistance to help the family move into a nearby two-bedroom apartment. Julie arranged for the donation of home furnishings from Humble Design, a nonprofit that helps to rehouse families and veterans in our region. Shortly thereafter, Lilly was able to get to work, and the family began assuming the full cost of rent within a few months.

Lilly says, "My experience with CCS people was so good! Our apartment is beautiful! Rosie is home with us now-three years old! Skip and I work different shifts at Sea-Tac; Skip is there from 1-10 and I start at 11 at night, so we are always with the children. The boys are happy. They share a room and go to the same school as before. The people at Sacred Heart are still our friends. They just gave the kids school supplies, even Rosie!"

Lilly's household is just one of 17 families served thus far this year at SHS.



REAL IMPACT BECAUSE OF YOU

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Working with Skip and Lilly has been a true please. It is these successes that shine brightness into hard days we all experience in social services, we are blessed!"

*- Julie Thompson,
Volunteer and Resource Coordinator*



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