

Partner Profiles



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Editor's Note: This article is part of an ongoing series that demonstrates the community impact of the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area (UWTVA) and its funded Partners. To learn more about how you can give, advocate, or volunteer in your community, or to view the article archive, visit www.uwtva.org. To contact staff, call (207) 778-5048 or e-mail info@uwtva.org.

AWAP

Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

Emily first had contact with the Abused Women's Advocacy Project (AWAP) when she was a 28-year-old mother of two children, ages 7 and 3, and pregnant with her third child. She had been married for 8 years.

The very beginning of her marriage was a joyful time for Emily. When she first became pregnant with a son, her husband, Alec could not have been more proud. It was a different story after their child Isaac was born. Alec resented the time Emily spent with Isaac and became verbally abusive. He constantly belittled Emily and criticized her housekeeping and her cooking. As Emily did not work outside the home, Alec controlled the money and became angry when Emily asked for funds to buy food. This behavior escalated when Sarah was born. Alec disconnected the home phone and kept a cell phone for himself so that Emily could not call anyone while he was away. He began spending a lot of time at a local bar, using their bill money. They were constantly behind in their rent.

When Alec found out that Emily was pregnant with a third child, he went into a rage. He broke some of Emily's favorite dishes. Every day, as her pregnancy came more visible, he would scream at Emily and the children. Their financial troubles made the situation tenser. One night, Emily screamed back. Alec picked her up and threw her against a wall. The neighbors downstairs called the police and Alec was arrested. The police officer responding to the incident gave Emily the phone number for AWAP's 24-hotline. She called that night, needing shelter because they had already received an eviction notice and she had no way to pay the rent on her own. AWAP put Emily and her children in a hotel for the night, and moved them to a domestic violence shelter the next morning.

Emily and her children spent about three months at the shelter. During that time, her second son, Matthew, was born. The shelter staff assisted her with basic living needs and connected her to local resources. They helped get Isaac settled into a new school and helped Emily find a good daycare situation for Sarah and Matthew. Emily was also connected with AWAP's court advocates, who assisted her in obtaining a Protection from Abuse Order and supported her through the difficult and emotional court process.

With the help of AWAP shelter staff, Emily applied for housing vouchers and was thrilled when a space opened up in AWAP's Transitional Housing building. After she moved into this apartment, she began working with AWAP's Transitional Services on some self-sufficiency goals for her future. Emily had

always wanted to go to college, but Alec never supported that dream. With the encouragement of the Transitional Services coordinator, Emily applied to a local community college and was accepted. AWAP and the college then connected her to scholarship sources and Emily began studying in the non-traditional field of automobile mechanics.

Today, Emily is one semester away from an associate's degree. Due to scholarship help, she will receive this degree without having outstanding loans. Her college has given her access to field experience and she is already working part time in a local mechanic shop. Her employer is so pleased with her work that he will be offering her a full-time job when she graduates. The salary she makes will allow her to fully support her family.

Emily's story is amazing, but not out of the ordinary. It is simply an example of the tremendous changes that can happen when a person's strength and determination is partnered with an experienced and multifaceted agency like AWAP, and enhanced by the local, state and federal resources found in communities. To contact AWAP, please call the offices located in Farmington at 778-6107 or, if you are in crisis, call 1-800-559-2927.