



Safety Net Story Community Schools Equip Families for Success

Over the holiday season, Maria Robles, a West Chicago mom, and her son were suddenly forced out of their home. At a time when they should be celebrating, they found themselves in crisis. **For help, she turned to Crystal Dela Huerta, a family liaison working in her son's school.**

Family liaisons from We Go Together for Kids (WeGo), a United Way community partner, provide services and advocacy to students and parents in schools across West Chicago Elementary School District 33. Much like social workers, they help to ensure students have safe housing, food in the cupboards and healthy and thriving households.

“I never would have imagined that through this phone call I made to ask for help that I would receive all I needed.”

—**Maria Robles**, West Chicago Mom


As the lead agency of the West Chicago Neighborhood Network, WeGo works to create “community schools” that prioritize more than students’ academic success, by addressing a wide range of needs. Through our partnership, United Way provides financial support, training opportunities, and more to WeGo to help sustain and grow programs and improve the quality of services.

“We’re helping families reach self-sufficiency, and we’re really being a guide for them, connecting them to resources in the community,” Crystal said. “The best and most rewarding part of my job is building those relationships with families.”

For Maria and her son, this support is critical. As she finalizes a divorce from her husband, WeGo and Crystal have connected them to counseling, food, clothing and transportation to and from meetings with lawyers. Then, when they were forced to vacate their home in December, they helped Maria secure rental assistance, which allowed her and her son to move into a new apartment just before Christmas.

“She’s extremely grateful and happy with the services that she’s received,” Crystal said, translating Maria’s praise. “When she was in the process of divorce, it was really difficult for her. She felt as though the world was crumbling and falling all around her and she wasn’t going to get through it.”

“But, she said, ‘I never would have imagined that through this phone call I made to ask for help that I would receive all I needed,’” Crystal added on Maria’s behalf. “Now, I feel like, little by little, I’m moving forward.” ■

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