

## MOM LISA

**Lisa spiraled into a dark place when she first learned she was pregnant. A week after, she found herself alone in her bathtub bawling her eyes out and not knowing what to do next.**

"I felt absolutely alone. I knew I wanted to have my child, but I was scared how that would even be possible," she said.

Today, Lisa's soulful eyes and bright smile easily hide the hardship she's been through. As a first-time mom, Lisa felt unprepared and isolated in her journey to motherhood. Most of her family and friends were hundreds of miles away in Michigan.

At the time she lived with her child's father, in a tiny room of his mom's apartment in Eugene, Oregon. He had never held a job or lived on his own before. The fears and uncertainty of parenthood for Lisa continued to grow.

"I could just keep going on living in quiet desperation, or I could share my story and reach out," Lisa thought to herself.

She struggled with depression and anxiety in the past and felt desperation inching back into her life. It took Lisa's courage and vulnerability to reach out for help.

### **From a desperate darkness into a ray of confidence**

Her moment of relief came when nurse Jill from Nurse-Family Partnership® (NFP) at Lane County Public Health entered their lives. Lisa was worried like many other first-time moms that her nurse might judge her or think she was incapable as a mother.

"I didn't know if she'd like me," Lisa said. "I had heard of child protective services and didn't know if she was a step between that."

When Lisa met with nurse Jill at the WIC building, she couldn't believe how laid back she was. Nurse Jill wore jeans, a t-shirt and made conversation easy.

"She looked like a friend and greeted me like a friend," Lisa said. "For me she looked like how I imagine myself looking like 10 years from now."

Lisa didn't know it at the time, but meeting nurse Jill would inspire her to pursue a career in nursing. In the meantime, the bond between nurse Jill and Lisa continued to grow.

Nurse Jill tailored her support specifically to Lisa's needs. Economic sustainability was a top priority for her. One of the hardest setbacks for her was moving from the small bedroom.

"We were cramped," Lisa said. "I was just growing bigger and the room was getting smaller."

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Lisa says that Rowan is such a light in her life and such an absolute delight to be around.

The obstacles felt stacked against her. Her income was too low for housing and she needed support with basic life-skills.

Her voice shakes as she recalls an application denial to an affordable housing complex. She had an emergency meeting with nurse Jill that night.

"It makes me want to cry right now. We did everything that we were supposed to be doing," Lisa said.

Nurse Jill was there to listen, encouraged her to keep applying and to not give up. Remarkably, she found housing two weeks before giving birth to her son Rowan.

Nurse Jill helped ease Lisa's first-time mom anxieties around raising and caring for her son. She kept track of Rowan's developmental milestones and provided Lisa with resources for his health.

"So much goes into raising tiny humans," Lisa said. "In my experience [nurse] Jill adapted to what we needed. She filled in areas where we best needed help."

### **A light of hope that multiplies**

Most of all nurse Jill helped Lisa gain the confidence

as a mother, a woman and a student. Lisa returned to school and was accepted to a nursing program in Eugene, Oregon.

"I would have not pursued going into the nursing field if I had not had my experience with NFP," Lisa said. "I didn't think I was capable."

Her mission is to give back and help shine hope in the darkest places in the lives of others. She wants to help mothers and children who are survivors of sexual assault and child abuse. Lisa hopes one day to also become an NFP nurse.

"I can come back from the hardships and help mothers in need," she said.

Lisa has started her advocacy work as one of six NFP graduates who were selected to be Parent Ambassadors. They advocate for NFP families and help increase access to the program nationwide to help first-time moms and their children.

Her son Rowan turned three last month. He has a big heart and is a ball of energy.

Lisa recently met up with another NFP graduate and her child for a play date. The two moms couldn't help but notice how chatty the toddlers were with each other.

They attribute their children's great vocabulary to being part of the program.

"This is what it means to be an NFP baby," Lisa said. "We learned the importance of talking and reading to our children early on."

Lisa said Rowan is full of sass now and tells her what to do but she wouldn't have it any other way.

"He's such a light in my life and such an absolute delight to be around."

In a way, Rowan and the guidance of nurse Jill illuminated the confidence she had within her all along.

Lisa's goal is to one day pass that same light of hope onto others as her nurse Jill once did for her.