

Dear W.C.,

My apartment was recently damaged due to my neighbor starting a fire while cooking. We did not have any fire in our apartment but it was filled with smoke. All our belongings were damaged by the smoke. Our beds, couch, chairs, clothing, everything smelled like smoke. We threw out most of our belongings but could not afford to buy any replacements. The children and I are sleeping on the floor because my son has asthma and could not handle the smell from the mattresses. We got some clothes from our church but the children still need some other clothing items. All my work clothes were ruined and what they had at my church would not be suitable. My ex-husband does not pay his child support regularly and most months we just get by. This has been really difficult.

Dear Readers,

I went to visit this single mother and children to see, or more accurately smell the damage for myself. I arrived at the small apartment building that I knew housed low-income tenants. It was a complex I had visited several times in the past when offering assistance. I went to the ground floor apartment and knocked on the door.

The door was opened by the woman I assumed had written the letter asking for our assistance. After introducing myself she did indeed confirm she was who had written the letter. She invited me inside saying she and the children were just preparing dinner. I followed her in and was then introduced to the children.

After meeting her ten year old and eleven year old sons I looked around the stark apartment. It was indeed empty. There was not only a lack of furniture but also there were no curtains or rugs. Everything had been stripped out of the apartment. The floors were bare concrete with some old carpet glue stuck in spots. The sharp tack strips lined the room but that was it. I asked the woman why they did not have carpet and she said her landlord had declined to replace the carpet even with the smoke damage. He felt the tenant that caused the fire was responsible and should pay. The tenant that had caused the fire had moved out without notifying the landlord so he was left with two damaged apartments. Meanwhile, this woman and children were trying to live in an empty apartment.

I watched as the woman finished preparing a simple meal of noodles for the children and declined when she offered me some. I could see there was barely enough for three people and did not want to take any food from the children. They looked awkward about eating in front of me but I insisted they eat their food. While they ate I asked if it would be okay to look around the apartment. The woman told me to go ahead.

I briefly looked into the two bedrooms and did indeed see bed frames but not mattresses on them. There was bedding sitting on the hard cement floors with several layers of blankets to

try and soften the sleeping surface. There was not even a couch to sleep on. I could only imagine how uncomfortable it was. I peeked inside closets that held only a few items of clothing. I could see the woman had not been exaggerating. She had thrown out everything they owned, including towels, bedding and pillows.

When I walked back into the kitchen the children were already through eating their small meal and said they were going to their room to do homework. The woman cleared the dishes from the small table so we could sit and talk there. They really were the only chairs in the whole apartment. Before she sat down I told her what documents I would need to see and she gathered these while we talked about the fire and the damage it caused. The woman told me how her son had become so sick from the smoke they had gone to the emergency room, another bill she said she was trying to pay. Her son's asthma had been very irritated by the smoke odor and that is what forced her to throw every belonging out.

The woman said, "I tried washing everything. I rented a steam cleaner for the carpets. I washed the walls and cabinets and it just kept coming back. I tried baking soda and all the other remedies I found online but it still did not work. And how do you wash a mattress anyway? I felt terrible that I could not get my sons out of here but we have nowhere else to go. I bought an asthma safe paint and painted the walls and cabinets myself. It smelled much better after that. I have spent every penny we have to try and fix this. It is just me and my boys." I could tell the diligent cleaning and painting the woman had done had gotten rid of the smoke smell as I did not smell any in the apartment.

I asked the woman what the landlord had done to help and she said he had only had the carpets ripped out but never replaced them. He kept insisting the neighbor that caused the fire was responsible but if they were missing how could this woman get them to pay for the necessary repairs and replacements? How could she have let her children suffer while waiting for the landlord or other tenant to help her with this? She was indeed stuck without any options other than doing what she could herself.

After reviewing her financials I could see they got by each month with only pennies to spare. They lived frugally on a tight budget. The budget did not have room for new wardrobes or household necessities. It did not have room for new mattresses or furniture. I knew this woman and children would be living without these items for a long time until they could ever hope to purchase them on their own.

I called to arrange for furniture to be picked out at the Inspiration Ministries Resale store. The woman gave me a very conservative list of items needed. I looked over the list and wrote down a few more items, including night stands and a dresser for the boys. I watched as the woman's eyes got big while I added these and a few more items. She said, "You don't have to get that for us. We can try to save up for them in the future." I loved her modesty but I

knew it would take her years to save up for these items. And thanks to all of you and Inspiration Ministries she would not have to wait any longer to have the simple comfort of a bed and chairs to sit on in her apartment.

Going over the woman's bills I noticed several medical bills she was struggling to pay and in paying them, along with the paint and cleaning supplies, she had neglected to pay her car payment the previous month. She also admitted this is where some of her food budget had been going and that is why they were eating just noodles for dinner that evening. I gave her some advice on several of these bills to keep this from happening again in the future. We paid her overdue car payment to prevent her from losing her reliable source of transportation and to help her budget going forward.

After going over the financial situation she was in I gave her several gift cards for clothing, household necessities and food. I saw the tears immediately spring to her eyes. When I picked up my phone and ordered the new mattresses to be delivered the following day I saw the tears rolling down her cheeks. When I hung up the phone the woman said to me, "You have no idea what this means to my boys and I. It would have taken me years to save up enough to for new beds. I was so afraid to take hand me down beds because I did not want to risk bed bugs. Now we will have new beds. I don't know how to thank you." I told her not to thank just me but to thank all of "You". You are the ones that make this assistance even possible.

I made my final phone call to the landlord and after a lengthy conversation he agreed to replace the carpet immediately as well. I told him about the boy's asthma and he agreed to get one that was low VOC to help protect him from the odors and possible triggers. By the time we were finished with our conversation he had a new compassion for this single mother and her two sons and he realized they were indeed struggling due to the neighbor's fire. I thanked him for his help and when I hung up the phone I shared the good news with the woman. By then the boys were back in the room and they brought a smile to my face when I saw their reactions when they learned they were going to get new beds.

With our help this woman and children have been able to change their lives. They now have clothing that fits even some suitable clothes for the woman's office job. The beds have given them comfort they forgot was even possible. No longer are they waking up with stiff backs and sore hips from sleeping on cement floors. The gift cards also provided new sheets, pillows and towels. They now have good nutritious food and do not have to worry about losing their car. Your hearts should feel good knowing the Caring and Sharing your donations have provided. The smiles and words of gratitude given to me by this woman and her two sons is shared with all of you and your caring generous hearts.

Thank you for your continued support of the charity work we all do together. It is a group effort, a labor of love and a blessing to many suffering in poverty in our communities. God Bless "You".

Health & Happiness, Love & God Bless Everyone, W.C./Sal

Please Help: There are many coming to us in desperation. Our good fellow creations need our compassion. Together we make a big difference. Make checks payable to: The Time Is Now to Help, P.O. Box 1, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. The Time Is Now to Help is a federally recognized 501(c)3 charitable organization licensed in the states of Wisconsin and Illinois. You will receive a tax deductible, itemized thank you receipt showing how your donation provided assistance for the poverty stricken.

A Very Special Thank You: Family Foundation, The Gallo Family Fund, Scott & Lisa Stearns, Mark & Natalie Reno, Martin Business, John Stensland & Family, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schuberth, Christine Adams, Thomas Morrissy, Black Point Estate, James & Shari Loback, William Davit, Teresa Hurley, Karin Collamore, Margaret Plevak, Gregory Swanson, Duane DeYoung, E. & Barbara Andres, David & Penny Froh, Ray Ring, Amberleigh Aller Cellak, & Sandra Johnson for their Horticultural Hall Spring Concert benefitting The Time is Now to Help, Henry & Virginia Hertl, Gayle Mason, Diane Bauman, John Oregan, and other concert attendees, our anonymous donors and ALL of you who support The Time Is Now to Help donation boxes, and the businesses that allow our donation boxes. Anyone who would like a Time Is Now donation box in your business, please call (262) 249-7000.

Memorials: Daniel & Donna Casey in memory of their sister Eileen. The estate of William & Mary Osborn, David Osborn, Valerie Lincoln and Judy Sokolowki in memory of Mary Osborn.

Prayer Chain: The power of prayer and positive thoughts comes from the true healer, our Lord answering our prayers. Please pray for healing for the following people: Mike, Caroline, Susan, Jennifer, Clarence, Jayden, Santana, Alex, Lily, Kaitlyn, Kynesha, Brandi's Grandma, & Marilyn.

Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop: Please donate your gently used household items and furniture to the Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop. For local pick up of major items or collection appointments please call (262) 275-2264. Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop is located at N2270 State Rd. 67, Walworth, WI 53184. Hours: Monday – Saturday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed Sundays. Please visit often knowing your support will provide life changing assistance for the fellow creations in their care. Inspiration Ministries is home for up to 80 residents that live with multiple physical and mental challenges. I thank all of you for helping. For more information visit www.inspirationministries.org.

Please visit: www.timeisnowtohelp.org