

Kelly's Story

Bar Harbor's beauty is truly remarkable. From the awe-inspiring Acadia National Park to the bustling shops of Main Street, it provides millions of summer tourists every year with an escape from their own realities. But what about the residents? The job market is limited, dominated by seasonal work and so is the housing market. Small apartments, if you can find one that offers year-round residency, cost much more than most can afford. The people who call Bar Harbor home are strong-willed and independent. Every year they watch the island turn from a summer oasis to a ghost town. As the tourists go home and the hotels and shops close, the jobs go along with them.

When Kelly first moved to Bar Harbor, she was, in her words, living the life. A house, a camp, and a marriage that provided a level of financial security not many have. After having two children, things started to become increasingly stressful at home. "I had a really good footprint here, a very solid understanding of who I was, what I brought to the table, I had a very solid reputation.

Then the wall came crashing down." Kelly is able to say this with an amazing amount of strength, and respect of the hard times she has fought through. When it became time for Kelly to leave her marriage, the stress continued to pile on. Before finding the house she is in now, Kelly was property

sitting, working in exchange for a place to call home for her and her boys, who were 3 and 5 at the time. With no kitchen, meals were either cooked in the toaster oven she had, or purchased from restaurants, taking up what money she did have.

Kelly has now been coming to the Bar Harbor Food Pantry for 2 years and wishes she had asked for the helping hand sooner. "I needed the comfort and confidence to know I could come here, but it takes asking. If I had asked for help sooner, I wouldn't be where I am today." Kelly speaks with confidence and wants to share her story with others to help them understand that she is not the only one who has faced this kind of adversity. "I had the life and I want somebody else to realize that if they have that life, they can turn to support like this. You can message the pantry and talk to them. I want them to do that sooner than later, I think it is vital."

Kelly's story is her own and much more complex than captured here, but representative of many in Bar Harbor, and all across Maine. Food insecurity here is tricky, most Mainers are hesitant to ask for a hand up when they've been knocked down. One of Kelly's biggest takeaways has been that "Asking for help, just for one thing, can help to relieve a lot of stress."