

Mary

I grew up in Trenton, Maine, less than a quarter mile from where I currently live with my two children. Growing up, I struggled in school due to diagnosed anxiety and depression and the impact of multiple surgeries. Then, one month before my 19th birthday, I gave birth to my daughter. I had to learn to grow up quickly. I received TANF for the first year of my daughter's life, after that working two, three, or four jobs at any given point. I was told that the odds were against me to graduate as a young mother, but I used this as fuel. Before my daughter reached six months old I had finished my GED. When she turned one and a half I enrolled part-time in college, balancing multiple jobs and motherhood with coursework. A year later I was pregnant with my son, finishing my semester two weeks early to give birth.

When my children were one and a half and four I was working three jobs, due to seasonal overlap, and attending classes. I would bring my coursework with me to my job at Robbin's Motel, laying my math homework out over the washers and dryers while doing laundry and deskwork. When my son turned two I left his father, becoming a single mother of two kids. I put off school to refocus on my small children.

Again, I was working two or three jobs with little support from my family or my children's father.

My children are now six and ten years old. When they started school last fall I began looking into what I needed to do to get back to school. I am currently working on a major in Mental Health and a Minor in Human Resource Management. I aspire to help reform the DHHS (Department of Health and Human Services) systems that are in place. It is frustrating to see the way my benefits are calculated. For example, during the summer I pay 80 dollars per week on childcare, but the DHHS calculates my childcare at just 19 dollars a week. Another example? I live a minimum of ten miles from work, however my car related expenses, about 510 dollars per month, are not covered despite a lack of alternative transportation. I want to see a logical system, one that helps those who are helping themselves. I want to get off of benefits and give back.

I go to the Bar Harbor Food Pantry to supplement my income and food stamps. It has kept me afloat when I am not sure I will make it to my next paycheck.

