

Faces of HOPE: Banding together for brothers



The stakes are always high when a young person is facing a housing crisis, but this case had triple the importance: Christopher, Nicolas and Austin, young brothers working together to avoid homelessness.

“It made my heart happy to see them so committed to staying together as a family,” said [HOPE Homes](#) Specialist Brenda Pritchard.

“They were trying hard to make things work but just didn’t have enough money and guidance to do it alone. I wanted to do everything we could.”

HOPE 4 Youth connected with the young men after a social worker at Champlin Park High School shared the story of them living in an apartment without parents. The two younger brothers, Austin and Nicolas, met the government’s definition of unaccompanied youth, even though they were staying with their adult brother Christopher and his girlfriend Sierra.



“Their parents weren’t in the picture,” said Pritchard. “Their father had moved away and stopped offering financial support. Their mother, who was experiencing homelessness, was also unable to offer help.”

Pritchard says, in early meetings with the brothers, the young men revealed they had fallen behind on rent and sometimes didn’t have enough money for food.

“School staff had been making weekly deliveries of breakfast, lunches, hygiene supplies and gift cards; but that couldn’t continue indefinitely,” Pritchard said. “And there was concern about what would happen after the school year. So we went to work.”

HOPE 4 Youth volunteers have started a once-a-week food delivery of items the boys enjoyed and could use for meals. Meanwhile, Pritchard is looking for solutions for the rent problem.

The family’s main income had come from Christopher’s job, but he was laid off during the pandemic. Unemployment covered some, but not all, of his salary. Sierra was also contributing by working two jobs, but they couldn’t make ends meet.

“I am amazed at the dedication Christopher and Sierra have for the younger brothers,” Pritchard explained. “The COVID crisis has just made it really hard for them to get their heads above water.”

The HOPE Homes program is helping the family in the near term with a rent stipend and gift cards for gas and household supplies. At the same time, Pritchard is working with Christopher on ways to get assistance with the past-due rent.

The support plan is coming together as the family is getting ready to celebrate an important

milestone. Nicolas is graduating high school with a 3.6 grade-point average and has plans to attend the University of Minnesota-Duluth this fall to begin studying psychology. The HOPE Homes program is providing Nicolas with a laptop for his college education.

“We are honored to help Nicolas and his family start this next chapter,” Pritchard added. “We look forward to celebrating their continued success.”