



UNITED WE FIGHT. UNITED WE WIN.

LIVE UNITED®

Patty Smith has had legal guardianship of her 11-year old granddaughter, Bella, since she was a baby. Bella has been diagnosed with mild cerebral palsy, encephalopathy, and epilepsy, and also has some cognitive delays. Despite these challenges, Bella is a sweet and spunky pre-teen girl who keeps Patty on her toes.

Patty and Bella relocated to Sparta two years ago in order to be closer to family. Patty is disabled, and their budget is tight. When they first moved to Sparta, they stayed with one of Patty's daughters and her eight children. Though Patty and Bella had a roof over their heads, more than one familial unit sharing a home like this is called "doubling up" – a type of homelessness.

Patty knew she and Bella needed more spacious and permanent accommodations, and that's when she reached out to United Way funded partner Families First of Monroe County. Its Safe & Stable housing program helped Patty locate an apartment and contributed toward the first month's rent and security deposit.

Housing that is both safe and affordable

is a luxury in many communities, and Monroe County is no exception. Unfortunately, Patty and Bella's first placement was only *one* of those things. In the middle of the night while she was sleeping, Bella was bitten on the finger by a rat. Desperate, Patty returned to Families First.

Unsure if/when Patty would get her security deposit back, Families First assisted a second time. Fast forward 16 months, and Patty and Bella are still happily housed in Tomah. Patty is grateful for their safety, as well as their new landlord, who didn't hesitate for one second when Bella was temporarily wheel-chair bound and needed a ramp put in. Patty has moved around a lot, and now she says "it's time to stay."

With additional referrals from Families First, Patty and Bella continue to thrive. Bella is starting middle school in the fall, and they recently rescued a dog, Bear. With Bear by her side and a room of her own, Bella has been able to sleep through the night for the first time in over a year.

United we win. We have one life. To live better, we must Live United.

32
people living in
Monroe County were
homeless the night
of the July 2017
Point-In-Time Count

Coulee Region Continuum of Care
Point-In-Time Count, July 2017;
www.wiboscoc.org/coulee



Great Rivers United Way