

IMAGINE

WHAT WE CAN DO TOGETHER

LIVE UNITED®

Carolyn and her adoptive parents moved to La Crosse from California when she was in elementary school. Her father's job kept him away from home for long periods of time, leaving Carolyn alone with her mother, who lived with untreated mental health issues.

Carolyn experienced things no child should. When her mother invited strangers into their home, Carolyn put herself in harm's way to protect her little sister, who was born when Carolyn was nine. Many years passed before Carolyn disclosed the sexual abuse she endured at the hands of these predators.

When Carolyn got pregnant at age 19, she felt societal pressures to get married even though the relationship was abusive. After a routine screening for risk factors at a prenatal appointment, Carolyn was referred to United Way funded program Healthy Families.

Carolyn was assigned a Healthy Families social worker, and soon they were preparing her to be the best mother possible. For once, Carolyn, who grew up equating love to self sacrifice, was on the receiving end of help.

Carolyn found the courage to leave her

husband when her daughter was 13 months old. Her social worker connected Carolyn with resources, several of which were United Way funded programs. She and her daughter ate at The Salvation Army, received clothing from New Horizons' boutique, and moved into subsidized housing.

With her social worker's help and a lot of grit, Carolyn created a one-year plan that included insurance, employment, and going to college. She accomplished all of this and more thanks to the foundation provided by United Way funded programs.

Twenty-ish years later, Carolyn has two degrees with a PhD in progress, two more beautiful children, and a career focused on uplifting and empowering women with stories like hers. Among her projects is Fierce Foundation, a self-sufficiency initiative she hopes one day can become a United Way program, bringing her journey full circle.

Imagine a Coulee Region where Carolyn and women like her are not defined by past traumas, but rather the perseverance it takes to overcome. It's possible with a gift to Great Rivers United Way.

60%
of adults report
experiencing abuse
or other difficult
family circumstances
during childhood.

Source: National Center for Mental Health



Great Rivers United Way