

PROFILE

Thrift Store Manager Shares Her Salvation Army Journey

A few years ago, Nicole Ryder found herself in a difficult situation. Despite being fully employed, she was unable to find an affordable place to rent, which led her to live out of her car. At the same time, she was five months pregnant and felt the pressure to secure a safe shelter for her baby. Fortunately, with the assistance of The Salvation Army in High River, Alta., she not only found housing and food support but also a job opportunity.

Nicole had consistently sought support from different organizations and food banks. It wasn't until someone suggested she called the Army, that her situation changed.

"I was defeated because I had heard 'no' so many times. I came into The Salvation Army with no high hopes, but they were so non-judgmental, so open and caring," Nicole shares.

As soon as she connected with The Salvation Army, they helped her find an apartment.

"I was terrified of having my baby and not having a roof over my head, so them giving me that hand up was huge," she adds.

Additional Support

When Nicole moved in, she realized that she had little money left over for groceries until her next paycheque. She did not know what to do. Nicole knew The Salvation Army had food support programs, but she was unsure if they would assist her again.

"When I walked through the door, I was greeted with open arms and they knew who I was. They were there to help, and it took away that embarrassing feeling that I had walking in. They made me feel like I was part of a family. They talked to me, asked me how things went getting into my new place. They really cared," Nicole says.

The staff helped Nicole register for the food bank, which she says covered more than the basics. She was set up with a two-week supply of groceries, which helped her stay afloat until her next payday. The food assistance she received allowed her to have her kitchen cabinets replenished.

Nicole believes that had it not been for the Army's help, she might have not been able to afford to have her child in her care.

"I would have had nothing."



Nicole Ryder,
Salvation Army Store Manager

A Fresh Opportunity

A couple of years after initially connecting with The Salvation Army, Nicole was presented with the perfect opportunity to become part of the organization that helped her. The High River Salvation Army Thrift Store had an opening for an assistant manager position. Nicole had previous retail managerial experience, so she applied and was hired.

"I'm able to give back that compassion that I received."

Today, she is the store manager and believes the job has served as a way for her to thank the Army for their support.

"I'm able to give back that compassion that I received because I am part of The Salvation Army now. I can give back by helping somebody feel better about themselves or their situation by giving them a hand up, whether it be encouraging words or helping them with clothing," Nicole says.

By Juan Romero, Staff Writer, The Salvation Army Canada & Bermuda Territory