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Scholar House of Central Appalachia opens in Pikeville

By: Hillary Thornton

PIKEVILLE, Ky. (WYMT) - After months of hard work and planning, a way to help single parents receive a college education became a reality in Downtown Pikeville.

Nestled in the middle of town, within walking distance of both the University of Pikeville and Big Sandy Community and Technical College, the Scholar House of Central Appalachia provides a place for single parents and their children to not only live...but thrive.

Cathe Dykstra, President of Family Scholar House, Inc. says, "There are the housing and childcare components but then there is also the programming and that is the really important part of engaging families and giving them hope."

Providing a place to call home while they pursue a college degree. The program offers childcare, early childhood education classes, as well as guidance for parents on topics like finances and stress management.

Executive Director for the Scholar House of Central Appalachia, Samantha Rogers says, "This program is dedicated to helping single parents pursue an education and become a role model for their children so they can become contributing members to society."

Dykstra says, "We have a growing number of single parents and when I say single parents I do not just mean those who have never been married. I mean those who are divorced or widowed and find themselves without the skills that they need to have a career...not a job...a career."

Giving both parents and children the tools needed to succeed.

After 11 years of marriage, Ashli Bryant, found herself in a place she never imagined.

Bryant says, "I walked away from my house that I had raised my two kids in, and went to my mom's. As soon as all of this came about my mom got diagnosed with stage four breast cancer."

At her weakest with a broken marriage and two young children, Bryant had to put getting her life back together on hold...or so she thought.

"I met with a lot of people at Upike and they all rallied behind me and said you can do this! I walked out of there sure I could," explains Bryant.

Enrolled in classes, moved into the brand new scholar house just before Christmas...lifting a burden for both Bryant and her sick mother.

However, the hits kept coming.

Bryant says, "I failed my first mammogram right when school was starting, then failed two more, have had two surgeries, and I'm having a double mastectomy this summer."

Determined to still get her degree, Bryant found support and stability at the scholar house.

"If I've had a bad day, or my mom has had a bad doctor appointment...they know that is my bench and they'll come sit at that bench with me and we will talk," says Bryant.

Allowing her to keep pressing forward, passing her first semester of college. Bryant says her children, ages 9 and 11, are also thriving.

"There is no reason for me to leave without a degree, and there is not going to be. My kids deserve this and so much more," says Bryant.

Turning her lowest point into a bright future for herself and her family.

"With everything that has been so bad, this has been my good," says Bryant.

The Scholar House of Central Appalachia has 45 apartments, so far 25 are occupied.

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