



A story about Housing in Missoula..... Jenni's story, a Housing Advocate Network volunteer.

I have been working since March with a mother and her autistic adult son. The mother got a job at a local hospital doing housekeeping. But on her second day of orientation, they told her that she could not work there because of a felony drug charge from over a decade ago. This woman and her son later went to apply for an apartment at a property management company which had advertised one that was within their price range; however, when they got there, the unit was occupied, and the clerk said that they still were not sure if the current tenants were going to stay or not. Nevertheless, the company wanted \$120 in application fees, since both adults would need to apply. This is non-refundable, for an apartment that may or may not be available! And how many others were applying for it, and what are the chances this family, with a felony criminal history and low credit would be seriously considered? In the meantime, the company gets to pocket and keep the application fee nonetheless.

In spite of the family's homelessness, the mother's hysterectomy while homeless, her getting fired, and both of them discriminated against by landlords, even as they enriched them, mother and son have developed a real and lasting bond with me. We get together once a week for about an hour to plan the next steps, and they are very much interested in sharing details about their lives with me. Last time we had a Welcome Back potluck, they brought a blueberry cobbler. So now I have a heartwarming relationship with a family experiencing homelessness, and it has opened my eyes to the humanity of these folks. This is success in its way, even if they are still homeless.

*This story was collected by members of the Advocacy for Housing Subcommittee. Look for other stories and information related to the lack of housing in Missoula, coming this fall at Holy Spirit. Pass it On: please share this House Story with others in your life.*