

Dantes Story

Story: Supporting a Single Father Through Compassion and Connection

A single father of four was referred to me by a court liaison seeking support through the Connection Initiative, a program I manage that connects community members with resources to address barriers to health and well-being. From the moment he arrived, our team's commitment to dignity, empathy, and non-judgment was essential. Coming to us from the court system, he was understandably hesitant, quiet, and unsure of whether he could trust the process.

His initial referral was for assistance with heating. As we began working together, I focused on building rapport through motivational interviewing, active listening, and meeting him where he was emotionally. I believe that sharing the same gender helped him feel more at ease, but more importantly, he quickly recognized that he was being treated with genuine respect. Over time, he opened up and shared more about the challenges his family and he were facing.

As the guardian of his four children, he had no money for Christmas gifts. His kids were running low on clothing and personal care items, and he hoped to give them even a few small things—games, essentials, maybe a toy or two—anything to bring some joy to their holiday. He was heartbroken at the thought of disappointing them.

Despite most holiday programs already being closed for the season, I couldn't give up. I immediately reached out to our community partners to see if anyone could help on such short notice. With compassion, coordination, and collaboration, especially with our trusted Cap Agency partner, we were able to pull together clothing, gifts, and essentials for each child.

The father provided sizes, interests, and needs for all four children. In the nick of time, just a few short days before Christmas, we had gathered everything. Our partners shopped, wrapped the gifts, and together, delivered them directly to the father's home—just in time. He was overwhelmed with gratitude, relieved to know his children would wake up to a Christmas morning filled with joy and dignity.

My Takeaway

This experience reaffirmed to me that you don't give up on people. Even when programs close, deadlines pass, or systems feel hard to navigate, Compassion and persistence can change the outcome. As a CHW, I couldn't walk away—and because of that, a father was able to give his children a Christmas he thought was impossible.