

## **Dottie Sines Story**

### **Home Again**

I first met her—or rather, heard about her—through a referral from a social worker at a nearby hospital. She was a woman in her seventies who had just lived through unthinkable loss: her home and all six of her beloved dogs had been destroyed in a fire. That same week, I had been at the hospital, educating their social workers and nurses about the services my organization provides. By the end of that day, several referrals came in, including hers.

She had been hospitalized 150 miles from her home due to severe smoke inhalation. After being discharged, her symptoms worsened, and she was readmitted. Her health was fragile, her breathing strained, and the grief of losing her home was layered on top of something even deeper—she had recently lost her son. That grief was still raw, unresolved, and heavy.

The hospital social worker asked for my help finding her housing. This was no simple task: she had no identification, no belongings, and she needed a place without stairs because even a few steps left her breathless after the fire. We arranged for her to temporarily stay at a homeless shelter while we worked to restore her identification—an essential step before she could move into senior housing.

Two weeks later, we were incredibly fortunate: the senior efficiency apartment we'd hoped for was still available. With help from partner organizations, we gathered clothing, furniture, and everything she needed to begin again. When she finally moved into her new home, she told me I was "an angel." She loved being close to parks and businesses, where she could use her walker to walk and enjoy the emerging spring weather.

She didn't just settle in, she thrived. She began participating in activities at her housing complex, sharing popcorn during gatherings and making new connections. She told me she was happier than she had been in a very long time.

Perhaps the biggest shift came when she agreed to attend counseling for the first time in her life. I believe this grew out of the trust we built, the moments we shared talking about grief, and the support we offered through motivational interviewing, compassion, and active listening.

Today, she is safe, supported, and smiling again, living proof of what stability and human connection can restore.