



## Initiatives in Action: Adult Self Sufficiency Initiative



We can do more together.

### Special Edition: From Victim to Victorious

Brooke was featured as a Mile High United Way success story two years ago. At that point in time, she had just overcome the odds by conquering her drug addiction, escaping from domestic abuse and winning back her children. To read her full story, please visit our website at [www.unitedwaydenver.org/Brooke](http://www.unitedwaydenver.org/Brooke).

Today, Brooke is self sufficient, financially stable, and most important, she's happy.



Brooke with her three children: Casey, Orion and Will.

### *Brooke's Story:*

I recently started my career at the Center of Financial Education at Young Americans Bank. It's a bank for kids, so I get to use my financial background and teach them everything from how to balance a checkbook to good savings habits. I went through the IDA (individual development account) program at Mile High United Way where I learned valuable financial education skills. I saved enough with my IDA account to put a down payment on my first home in Lakewood. So, at my job, I get to pass on those lessons to the kiddos at the bank. I get to watch them save up for something and then make the asset purchase. It's awesome to give back to the community.

I come from a good family and grew up in this community where I graduated with honors from Cherry Creek High School. I wouldn't have believed you if you told me I would grow up to be a drug addict dealing with domestic violence. Conversely, when I was an addict and getting abused, I would have never believed you if you told me I'd be self sufficient and happy one day. I think the important lesson is that this can happen to anyone. People make mistakes, but if we reach out and take the help that is given to us, we can recover, heal and be happy again.

My sons are amazing kiddos. Orion is 3, Casey is 8 and Will is 10. I would say that with everything we've been through that I'm their rock. My two older boys walked through my addiction with me and they know how hard I've worked to provide a good life for them. The stability I've been able to give them has increased ten-fold over the last two years.

We are really focused on staying in routine. Things can get really crazy raising three kids as a single parent. All of my boys attend an amazing children's center nearby. Orion is there all day; Casey and Will attend after school while I'm at work. It's a high quality child care development program. And it turns out the program is partially funded by Mile High United Way, so things have really come full circle.

## From Victim to Victorious - cont.

Our family loves the outdoors and I now have the opportunity to expand their horizons. We play in Wyoming, go fishing and hiking. It's great to be able to take them.

I've now provided them an environment where they can thrive. My hope is that they grow up to be good boys and that they'll raise healthy families of their own.

I feel great. I wake up in a home that's mine. I go to a job I love. I also get to contribute to the greater good. On top of everything, I get to come home to my kids.

I've worked really hard to get to where I am. I work six days a week but I have everything I could have ever asked for. When I was six months pregnant with my third son we were homeless. Now, I just bought a new truck this week. I'm thankful. Life is good.

For more information about our Adult Self Sufficiency Initiative, please visit our website at [www.unitedwaydenver.org](http://www.unitedwaydenver.org).

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*Mile High United Way's Adult Self Sufficiency initiative focuses the collective generosity of businesses, government, nonprofit agencies and donors to help low-income people build skills and assets to achieve a self sufficient life. We empower individuals and families to achieve financial stability through transitional housing, career training, educational scholarships, and IDAs. Building financial assets allows people to live with dignity and respect and saves our community thousands of dollars each year in emergency medical and social services costs.*

*"Mile High United Way collaborates with financial institutions, community-based organizations and government entities to create financial opportunity", said Barclay Jones, vice president, Assets for Family Success. "By offering IDAs to hard-working community members, Mile High United Way serves as a catalyst for improving the metro Denver community. For Brooke and hundreds of other families, we are working to empower IDA savers to make wise financial decisions that allow them to improve the quality of their lives."*