A Mother's Heart

Carmella makes decisions based upon what's in the best interest of her children.

There was a time when she thought that their best interest was served if their father was in their daily lives, and so she stayed with him. **Even after having been thrown down the stairs and receiving blows to the stomach during a pregnancy, she stayed.**

Carmella knew she had to flee when she realized her children had noticed their dad's treatment of her, and then began to emulate it. But where could she to go? Carmella's abusive husband had cut her off from her own family, friends and finances. She was frightened and felt trapped.

On previous "bad days," she would load the children in the car and drive around and around but could think of nowhere safe to go. Defeated, she would return home. **This time she left and did not turn back.** Carmella checked into a motel and began making phone calls.

Safe harbor was found at the Salinas Safe House / Women & Children's Emergency Shelter operated by Community Homeless Solutions, formerly Shelter Outreach Plus.

Carmella's children were able to step directly into a new school and, encouraged by her case manager, Carmella found employment. **For years she'd been told that she would never amount to anything and that no one would ever hire her.** Not true. Her employer immediately recognized her leadership skills and promoted her to management at once.

Soon thereafter, Carmella was able to move into Homeward Bound, a transitional housing program for women and their children, also operated by Community Homeless Solutions. Sitting in her new living room she speaks of her goal to save money. Carmella wants to someday own her own home and to never have to bounce from place to place again.

When asked what she would tell a young mom living in situation similar to hers of two years ago, Carmella emphatically says, "You must get out!" And once out, she advises, "Don't try to do it alone. Get help. Look into available programs, join a church, find a counselor."

Carmella is free. She and her children live in a safe neighborhood, enjoy family movie nights on the comfy couch and do homework together at their kitchen table. She knows her children have a brighter future.

The twinkle in her eye when she talks of her children is a gift to behold. This mom has partnered with community resources and made a way for her kids to look expectantly forward.

Well done, Carmella !!!