

"It's Not About Me, It's All About My Daughter"

When William became a single dad to his beautiful daughter, Alika, he knew his life would be dedicated to her from that moment on.

Alika was only six, and as she grew William depended on help from his sister to juggle work and her school schedule. "I worked 12 hour shifts at a box manufacturing company to make ends meet. I would drop Alika at my sister's house at 2 a.m. and pick her up from school in the afternoon," recounted William.

Like William, many parents depend on extended family to balance the demands of work and the needs of children. And the arrangement worked well until his sister became ill unexpectedly and passed away.

Without a support system, William had to move closer to Alika's school. "The apartment was expensive, but worth it because we were near her school and in a good neighborhood. My mind was at ease because I knew she was safe and that the neighbors always kept an eye on her. **Education is the most important thing. I want to give her the best education I can afford,**" said William.

Father and daughter were doing well in their new apartment and neighborhood. William was respected at his job where he had worked for seven years and life was good. "I kept things running smoothly at work," he said with a smile filled with pride.

And then, two common yet unexpected events resulted in crisis for their little family.

Alika developed allergies and asthma. When she had an attack or became ill, William had nobody else to care for her. "I had no choice, I simply had to leave work a couple of times to take care of her." After seven years of service, working the night shift for his company, William was laid-off from his job. "I cried. I'm not a quitter. I kept asking what did I do wrong," he remembered.



Above: William and Alika smile as they prepare to leave the Annette G. Strauss Family Gateway Center.

Next, their car broke down and needed repairs. As we all know, our cars are a lifeline and repairs are a must no matter what the cost. But now, with no job or cash reserves after repairs, they couldn't pay the rent.

William went to a family member who helped them for only two weeks. And then, after a couple of days in their car, William and Alika found Family Gateway.

"The Lord has blessed us. Here I know Alika is safe and I don't have to worry about anything. Since coming here I have found a job and am saving money for an apartment and bills so we can be on our own again. I'm willing to work 24 hours a day to build up some savings," said William.

William and Alika's story is not unusual. Without a support system of family and friends and the resources to weather unexpected expenses, a minor event can become catastrophic for any family.

Thankfully, your support offers hope and help to families working to regain their self-sufficiency.

SUPERBOWL HOST COMMITTEE DOCUMENTARY TO INCLUDE FAMILY GATEWAY



Look for Family Gateway kiddos in an upcoming documentary produced by Slant 45 and the Superbowl Host Committee. We're honored that the Down Syndrome Guild of Dallas chose Family Gateway as their service project, and will host a fun-filled talent show to be featured in the film screened at the Angelika theatres January 28, 2011.

"The teens for Down Syndrome Guild picked Family Gateway because they wanted to do something fun and help other kids like themselves. Sometimes it's hard to just be a kid who may be different from others and have fun, so they wanted to have a party for the kids at Family Gateway to forget about their troubles for an afternoon. After

touring the facility, everyone was so moved by the wonderful services offered there, they decided to do a drive for backpacks and other supplies to donate to the center also," shared Program Specialist, Cara Prentice.