

Homeless? **Yes**; Drugs? **Yes**; High School Drop Out; **Yes**, Single Mother of 8 Children? **Yes!** This is my story; this is me; Candy Matautia.

It all started when I was 16 years of age when my first child was born. Did it set me back? Of course it did. My child was born with a heart murmur so I tended to her every need, I was a mother. A young naïve but proud mother.

Life was tough growing up; I didn't have the stability or guidance as a young child. I only knew the welfare system as did my parents so I mimicked that; I had kids and I had welfare. It was easy and so was having children. My siblings and family members were also drop outs, nobody pursued college; it wasn't part of our upbringing, it wasn't what we were comfortable with. Did I graduate from High School? No not as planned but I managed to return decades later and graduated with my GED in 2002 through the Waipahu Community School for Adults.

I've struggled in my relationships, I've struggled with drugs; it was how I masked the feelings of depression; of failure, it was what I knew best. I've seen hardship, I've lived hardship, my parents raised me to only know hardships but we managed to get through it. Not so healthy but we managed.

I can't do that anymore; I don't want my children to repeat the cycle; I want out! They need out! My first step was to get clean and sober and stay focused; the next was to get out of the abusive relationship that just fueled the fire. Did I do it? I DID! I have been clean and sober for 2 years now. My thoughts are positive and motivating, my actions are work in progress but I'm moving forward. Day by day. Word for Word. Thought for Thought. but I'm moving forward.

I have two young adults now who I am rooting for and encourage daily to be self-sufficient however I depend on them to help me which sets them back which robs them of their future. My oldest daughter is now a fulltime college student and works fulltime. My second eldest daughter works part time and helps care for the younger siblings. I have 8, 8 children; two of them; are twins who just turned one. They all have different needs, they all have challenges, and they keep me busy, they make my crazy but at the same time they keep me sane. We manage to make things work and Yes we are ohana but if I want them to be stable and successful I need to let them grow.

My biggest challenges at this time are not having childcare, reliable transportation or full time employment. Another challenge I face is planning and preparing to secure permanent housing as our living situation at Ohana Ola O Kahumana Transitional Shelter is temporary.

I've recently enrolled myself into Leeward Community College to pursue my education to receive my AA Degree in Social Science and my certificate in CSAC; I plan on obtaining my BA Degree in Social Work thereafter. With education and life experience I truly believe that I will make for a compassionate, understanding and motivating Social Worker. I dream of giving back to my community and empowering the lives of those less

fortunate. I also would like to focus on the teens in the community and be a mentor and guide them through their path; I'm hoping to make a great impact on the community or one life at time.

To be awarded such a scholarship would mean so many things for me. It would mean that change is about to happen; that my dream to completing my educational journey would be on its way, that through this journey its going to be bumps in the road but I will overcome it. It may be transportation, it may be educational resources, it may be childcare. The road to success is endless. I need this! I want this and you can make this all possible.

I know there will be many other applicants; each one a story behind it and I know each of us are deserving of it. This is a snip it of my story and my reasons why. You will help ME, another statistic of Waianae end the cycle of homelessness and help a single mother in need.

Thank you for allowing me to express myself and for giving me a chance!

Yours truly;

Candy Matautia