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## From United Way beneficiary to benefactor

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In the past three years, Cathy Franklin has turned from a beneficiary to a benefactor.

A former participant in social service programs funded, in part, by the United Way of Greater Cincinnati through Welcome House of Northern Kentucky in Covington, Franklin is donating to the campaign for the first time.

Working as a waitress at the Frisch's restaurant in Fort Wright, she just signed up again to pledge a dollar a week for a second year in a row in 2010.

"I wish I could give more," she said. "But I love it. It makes me feel wonderful."

Franklin, 37, grew up in Over-the-Rhine and ended up living there with her sons. One of the boys' fathers is dead. The other has escaped the reach of child-support enforcement officials, she said.

She qualified for a housing subsidy in Campbell County - where she wanted to move to get away from the violence in Over-the-Rhine. Then a marijuana charge re-surfaced, disqualifying her from a Section 8 voucher. (She later paid the ticket, Hamilton County Common Pleas records show.)

She ended up at Welcome House, which is receiving \$165,310 in United Way money this year. Its services are for the homeless or people at risk of homelessness.

Franklin, 37, has lived with her sons, now 17 and 13, in the Gardens at Greenup apartments - an affordable housing program that's part of Welcome House. She is planning to move out to make room for a needy family.

Through Welcome House, Franklin earned her GED, received housing assistance and job training. She worked first as a banquet server at a Northern Kentucky hotel and rode the bus back and forth. She still takes the bus to Fort Wright for her waitress job.

Her two sons have concrete plans to attend college, she said.

"Our lives have turned around," Franklin said. "I am grateful for the help. I've always been a person who doesn't mind giving back for what I've been given. I've been through situations where I've been really unhappy and depressed. Now I feel good about myself."

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