

## ***Help for a New Mom***

### ***A Story from Care Net's residential program, The Elizabeth House***

It was time for a new beginning. After discovering that she was pregnant, Amanda\* and her boyfriend climbed on a Greyhound bus and made their way from Denver, Colorado to Madison, Wisconsin. Leaving behind abusive and unhealthy family relationships, she started a new life here in Dane County.

But the road to this new start was bumpy. When temporary housing fell through, Amanda\* found herself homeless, staying in a temporary shelter. Lacking adequate nutrition, her health began to suffer. Her doctor informed her that her unborn baby also was not growing well. Six weeks later, Amanda was again able to line up temporary housing. But her symptoms intensified. Her hands and feet were swelling. Her vision was blurred. Pain and nausea swept over her body.

Although she tried to ignore the symptoms, they only got worse. One day she could no longer read the numbers on the clock. At the emergency room, she was diagnosed with preeclampsia. Doctors informed her and her boyfriend that her condition was very grave, "life or death," requiring an emergency C-Section.

Ten weeks before her due date, Amanda gave birth to a baby girl weighing just 3 pounds 6 ounces.

While Amanda searched for some stable living arrangements, her daughter spent the first month of her life in neonatal intensive care. About this time, a friend recommended Care Net. "I never dreamed they would take me," Amanda says, "but I prayed they would." Those prayers were answered in early 2010 when Amanda's baby was discharged from the hospital and the two of them entered The Elizabeth House program.

What has life been like at The Elizabeth House? Amanda describes it this way: "This is a holy house with holy people." She is grateful for a safe place to start over with her daughter. She is growing closer to God, learning parenting and practical life skills. "I never really knew how to cook before coming here," she says. Amanda's daughter, as of early March 2010, is nine pounds and healthy. With support from staff, Amanda is actively searching for work and making plans for a real new beginning.

*\* Fictitious name to protect privacy.*