

USHC: Were you actually out on...like, actually having to sleep outside or be outside at night?

Kristin: (Nodding.) Ah, yeah.

USHC: Can you tell me a little bit about how that...what that made or what that feeling was like, and how awful it must have been?

Kristin: It was terrible, and I was, like, 12 or 13 then.

USHC: So you where 12 or 13 and you had to be out...and were you alone?

Kristin: Yep.

USHC: Oh, Kristin...well, what...how did you find food and shelter and stay warm? What did you do about your eating and staying warm?

Kristin: Eating? I would go to a friend's house or somebody house, and sometimes I didn't eat...and I guess I tried to spend time around a lot of people so I would have somewhere to be for the time being.

USHC: So when you say you were around people, you were around people outdoors? Did you have to sleep outside, you said?

Kristin: I have, several times, but I just found somewhere to go occasionally.

USHC: And you were 12 years old...

Kristin: (Nods.)

USHC2: What caused that to happen?

Kristin: My dad was in jail. My mom was on drugs.

USHC2: Okay.

USHC: So, your dad was in jail and your mom was on drugs. Were you able to find adults that you could feel a little bit safer sometimes with? And stay with?

Kristin: Not until we were placed in foster care.

USHC: Okay then, so then you were placed in foster care after that?

Kristin: Well, we was placed with a family.

USHC: So, when you were in this situation, did you find that there was maybe anybody that had a good influence on you that you thought maybe there's hope...maybe I can...maybe life can get better?

Kristin: Not really, me and my sister just stuck together.

USHC: Okay, so she was with you.

Kristin: Yeah, me and my sister, and then she winded up having a baby, which is my niece. So it was like, all three of us really stuck together.

USHC: Okay, were the people on the street good to you? Were they frightening to you?

Kristin: Then, I didn't care...

USHC: You just didn't care...you were so upset?

Kristin: (Nods.)

USHC: And you didn't know where your mom was at that point in time?

Kristin: (Shakes head "No.")

USHC: But you knew your dad was in jail.

Kristin: (Nods.)

USHC2: How long were you actually on the street, Kristin? You say 12 until foster care...how long was that?

Kristin: It was probably a couple of months, but some nights I had places to go and some nights I didn't.

USHC2: Okay.

USHC: And then you were in foster care?

Kristin: (Nods.) Uh-huh.

USHC: How old were you when you were able to become involved with the Upstate Homeless Coalition?

Kristin: I came here in September of this year.

USHC: Okay, so you came here in September of this year. And you were in foster care for how long?

Kristin: Until I was 16.

USHC: Okay. And when you left foster care, is that when you came here?

Kristin: They placed us with my Daddy...he was out of jail then. They placed us with him, and then from there, I moved to Greenville with my cousin, and I stayed there up until, like, March or April. Then I came back here and stayed with my sister...that's when they started having problems between the two of them, and that's when I had to find somewhere else to go.

USHC: Okay, and that's when you were in touch with Upstate Coalition?

Kristin: (Nods.) Uh-huh.

USHC: Okay, How did that work for you to move from living with your sister to transitioning into transitional housing? What was the process there? What did you have to do?

Kristin: Well, I was required to fill out applications to look for a job...write down my goals and stuff like that.

USHC: So you filled that out and then...they moved you into transitional housing and you were able to get this house then right? What do you think you'd like to be doing, like, 5 years from now? What are some of your goals?

Kristin: Well now, I'm in school trying to get my G.E.D.

USHC: You're in school? Good for you!

Kristin: And after that, I want to go to Tech or something.

USHC: Okay, and what are you interested in doing?

Kristin: I either want to try to be a nurse, or work in a school, not being a teacher, but having some sort of job in a school.

USHC: Something like a teacher's assistant.

USHC2: Something like a guidance counselor or...

Kristin: Yeah.

USHC2: Okay.

USHC: So maybe go to Tech, a technical or vocational school, after you've gotten your G.E.D.

Kristin: Uh-huh. Yes.

USHC: That's great. Are you excited?

Kristin: Yeah, things are working out for me a little bit better.

USHC: Life is going better?

Kristin: Yeah.

USHC: And how long have you been in this transitional housing?

Kristin: Since September 12th.

USHC: Since September, okay. Who's been the most helpful to you do you think, during your transition? Getting, you know, like everything done...getting moved into here. Who has been most helpful to you?

Kristin: Well, of course, Sherry, and my sister...my sister helps me a lot. We get along sometimes, sometimes not.

USHC: That's all right.

USHC2: That's pretty typical.

Kristin: But she helps me a lot.

USHC: And she's older, right?

Kristin: She's twenty.

USHC: So, she's older...a little older than you. So, she and Sherry have been a big help to you... influence for you. Let's see. Do you feel like a totally different person now, and through you experiences, has it changed your life a tremendous amount? How do you think you've grown from having to go through...because you were young?

Kristin: It changed me somewhat, but, I feel like I'm more mature than most people my age because of what I've been through.

USHC: For sure.

USHC2: Kristin, what would a typical day be like on the streets? I mean, like, you know,

we don't understand...we have no way of understanding.

Kristin: I mean, it just destroyed me...trying to get what you need but...

USHC2: Okay, so you wake up at some time, and you do what?

Kristin: When I was...I would just wake up from wherever I was and then go to my friend's house...or somebody house, and sit there, and, I don't know...just hang out.

USHC: Just hang out?

Kristin: There really wasn't that much else to do.

USHC2: It wasn't in the cold weather, I take it, or was it during a warmer time of the year, or...

Kristin: Well, for me, it was during the winter.

USCH2: Ewwwh.

USCH: So, it was during the winter. When you slept out, did you have a blanket or something...or anything?

Kristin: (Shakes head "No.")

USHC: No. You just laid...were you under any covering or...?

Kristin: Yeah, there were places I'd find that were kind of sheltered like...

USHC: And you'd be with your sister...so you and your sister stuck together during the day on the street?

Kristin: No, we were separated...my sister didn't go to that.

USHC2: Just you.

Kristin: Really, I don't know where she was at that point in time.

USHC2: Ewwh, how did that feel, being on your own? I mean, that would have to be pretty frightening, I'd think, I don't know...

USHC: At 12 years old!

Kristin: I kind of got used to it.

USHC: So, you weren't afraid?

Kristin: (Shakes head "No.")

USHC2: Other people, did you run into other...

Kristin: I was like, the stuff I was going through then, I'd be too scared to try and do it now.

USHC2: Did you run into other people who were homeless?

Kristin: (Gestures.) Ummm, I mean, sort of, yeah.

USHC2: How did they react to you...especially being so young?

Kristin: I mean, really, most of them were on drugs and stuff.

USHC2: Okay.

USHC: So, they were on drugs, and didn't really, did they leave you alone?

USHC2: Okay.

Kristin: They didn't pay attention to me. They didn't really care.

USHC2: Okay.

USHC: Okay, so you said sometimes, when you were out like that on your own, sometimes you'd have something to eat, and sometimes you wouldn't? Where would you get your food? Where did food come from when you were able to get food?

Kristin: Friends...or just, people I knew.

USHC: Just people you knew would give you food. You didn't have a soup kitchen or a shelter type environment to go to get anything?

Kristin: There was soup kitchen, but I never really went to it before, though.

USHC: Of course, there were fewer here, obviously and there was no shelter. Because that's what, you know, we're trying...we're going to do. Hopefully...and we will...we'll get it done. Would you have any advice to give today, like, if you saw somebody around that's homeless, whether it be here or elsewhere...what advice...what kind of advice would you give them?

Kristin: I would just tell them not to give up.

USHC: Just hang in there.

Kristin: Yes.

USHC: Did you pray a lot?

Kristin: (Laughs and nods.)

USHC: I'm sure you did.

Kristin: Still do.

USHC: Very good...that's about all you had to...had for help, wasn't it?

Kristin: (Nods.)

USHC: It is amazing that you were 12 years old and on the street, alone. Dan and I cannot imagine. I cannot imagine how that must have felt. And look where you are. I am...we're both so proud of you. You see what you've been able to do, and you're pulling yourself out of all that misery, and you have a future. And that is absolutely...absolutely fantastic. And we're so happy that it has worked out that way for you. And yet, I hate to hear all the misery that you have been through. Do you feel like that a person just has to keep on keeping on? And not just give up, like you said?

Kristin: (Nods.) Uh-huh.

USHC: Is there anything, as you look back, makes you understand your experience better? Do you have resentments about it? Are you just...you know, when you look back on it, what thoughts do you have on it...as to "well it just happened," or...?

Kristin: I still hold grudges towards people, like my family and stuff, but my mom, I'm still close to.

USHC: Your mom, you're still close to.

Kristin: I know she has a drug problem...she still does, but she's doing better than she was.

USHC: So...there's hope.

Kristin: Yeah.

USHC: There's hope, and she is doing better.

Kristin: (Nods.)

USHC: Is she getting help?

Kristin: She has been. And I don't see it as big of a problem as it was back then.

USHC: So you do have a relationship with her. What about your father?

Kristin: (Gestures.) It's okay.

USHC: So, in five years you hope...are you almost finished with you're G.E.D?

Kristin: My classes are over in January.

USHC: Okay, and then you're going to work on getting into the vocational or...

Kristin: Tech.

USHC: Tech. Well, are there any questions you want to ask Dan or me about what we're trying to do? Do you have any suggestions to us as to, you know, what you think we might could do? Because you're the one...people like you are who we are very much wanting to help, and we don't want 12 year olds out on the streets. Or anybody...any age out on the street. So, is there anything you want to ask us, or offer to us, that you think might be helpful to someone because you've walked in those shoes and we haven't.

Kristin: (Shakes head "no.") I don't know.

USHC2: What's the best way, you think...I mean, what kind of things can we do...if you were to have come into our facility, what would have been the best things we could have done for you, to help you out...besides, obviously, shelter and food?

Kristin: Ummm, I guess just, like, have numbers and something, telling where they can call for help, if there wasn't help available through y'all. At least, some kind of alternative of some other place they could go to.

USHC2: Like a referral service of different places that could help you out. Okay, if you were, hypothetically, if you were homeless today, and we had a shelter would that be what you were looking for? Is that kind of support from us, you know...

Kristin: If there was a shelter and I was homeless, I would go to it.

USHC2: Okay.

USHC: You would go to it.

USHC2: Okay.

USHC: You would definitely go for help, because what we want to do is make it a transitional type thing where people like you...if it happens to them, which it will...that they can come there, and we can give them transitional help, you know, not to just stay there forever, but a transition to help them.

Kristin: Uh-huh.

USHC: Well, I think you are a pretty amazing young lady...that you have hung in there and that you are not out on the street anymore, and you're not a drug addict because it sounds like you have had a very tough beginning in your life. It is great to see someone like you who has pulled up, and you said you never gave up. You never gave up hope.

USHC2: Yeah. How'd you do that? How do you do that in those circumstances?

Kristin: [Inaudible.]

USHC: It's unbelievable.

USHC2: Yeah.

USHC: I mean, it is...

USHC2: I would find it overwhelming. I'd be frightened out of my mind.

USHC: It is overwhelming. It's truly overwhelming. And I guess what really is so wonderful to see, is to see you here now. What the good Lord and you have been able to do together to pull through, because you have had a hard road. You truly, truly have. And you don't know how happy it makes Dan and I to see what you're doing and that you just didn't give up. And it's like Dan said, it blows my mind, just overwhelms me to think that you at 12 years old were out on the street.

Kristin: (Nods.)

USHC: You're a very strong lady.

Kristin: Well, thank you.

USHC: And we're very happy for you to have this wonderful situation.

Kristin: Thank you.

USHC: Well, thank you, so much! Dan is there anything more? Thank you so much for letting us come into your home and talk with you, and we wish you nothing but the very, very best. We'll keep you in our prayers, and when we get our facility done you might have to come down there and help us.

Kristin: (Laughs.) Okay.

USHC: Because I'm sure we'll need all the help we can get, right, Dan?

USHC2: We're going to be looking for some volunteers, especially those that know what they are talking about.

USHC: You know it. You certainly know...you certainly know. So thank you so much...unless Dan has something else.

USHC2: Nah.

USHC: Nope.