

Bonnie's and Miguel's story



Years ago, as a Hampshire student, Miguel heard about the work of Pioneer Valley Habitat. At that time, needing assistance to own a home of his own was far from his mind as he prepared for his future work in the film industry. After a lot of hard work and some years of making a life for himself, a serious chronic illness that reared its ugly head ten years ago changed everything for Miguel who by then had married his soulmate, Bonnie. They found themselves in a place of quiet desperation at the hands of a wasting illness that left Miguel unable to work much less do anything sometimes for days on end.

In the beginning, when “the wheels came off,” Bonnie and Miguel were forced to move again and again, looking for places to live inexpensively with their two young children. Sometimes that place was with a generous member of the local Earth Dance community until they could find somewhere else, and it was that same community that provided emotional support and hosted fundraisers to help Miguel and Bonnie. In recent years College Church has been a tremendous source of support. “None of this was what we had envisioned for our life as a young couple,” Bonnie says. “It was a nightmare.”

Once their youngest child turned three, Bonnie was able to return to work. While this created more stability for them, there was still the uncertainty of Miguel's health, a lack of diagnosis and prognosis. To this day, there are more questions than answers for Bonnie and Miguel, and every day they do what they can to manage his health concerns while Bonnie works and they raise their two children.

Two years ago, Miguel had a conversation with Pioneer Valley Habitat executive director Megan McDonough about Habitat's homeownership opportunities, but it wasn't until a year later that Bonnie saw a flyer for a Habitat homeowner application process opening for a home on Glendale Rd in Northampton that would be right sized for their family. She and Miguel scrambled to assemble the necessary documentation but they couldn't bring themselves to tell anybody that they had even applied to Habitat for a house. Other opportunities for homes had fallen through over the previous year or so and Bonnie and Miguel didn't want to get their families' and friends' hopes up, not to mention their own, until they had been officially selected.

That was one of the hardest secrets to keep, especially as they continued to progress through the acceptance process into the lottery. When they did win the lottery, all joy broke loose!! Bonnie remembers calling their families...they were utterly shocked, surprised and ecstatic. “This was the first light in a long time.” Bonnie says. “Literally, we won the lottery – the Megabucks Lottery was going on at the same time and when we heard our news we said it was way better!”

Different people might have given up. Bonnie and Miguel, though, continue to move forward in life with determination, resilience, and faith. “I believe in miracles,” Miguel says. Bonnie adds, “I'm still basking in the fact that this is the best thing that has ever happened to me...besides meeting Miguel and having my kids.”