



The Y.™ For a Better Us.™

Homeless Kids go to Camp

Krystal's mom died in April 2015 of a sudden heart attack.

“My mom and I were a team. We lived together and she took care of my kids while I was studying to get my GED and working as a dishwasher,” Krystal says.

She was a single mom living paycheck to paycheck with a 12-year-old son Austin, and 9-year-old daughter Kasie. By the end of the school year they were homeless.

“I was tired, scared, sad and not thinking well,” she says. “Summer was starting and the kids were out of school. No job, no home, no hope. We ended up at Family Promise and that opened up some opportunities for me to move forward.”

Meanwhile, the kids needed a distraction from their emotional situation while their mother figured out their next steps as a family. The folks at Family Promise have a partnership with the Downtown YMCA and offered Austin and Kasie scholarships for Day Camp.

“It was their first summer camp experience and at first they hated to leave me,” Krystal says. “But they made new friends -- even with the counselors which is a big thing since their father isn't around. One counselor cleaned out his closet and gave Austin a whole bag of his clothes!”

The family was sleeping in a different church each week and often did not have access to showers, so the counselors arranged for them to take showers at the YMCA and even brought them shampoo.

“We played basketball, kickball, sang songs, went swimming, skating, to a movie and to the water steps,” says Austin. “I give the Y an A with a million pluses. I know my mamma wanted me to have a great time and I did, plus she got a break from me,” he grins.

His little sister Kasie liked to help the autistic kids, especially during swimming when she carried a special needs kid on her back in the pool. “He was always laughing,” she says with a smile.

“The YMCA is just a surprising big ole fun place. The last few days all the counselors gave us lots of hugs,” Kasie remembers. “I made a picture to thank all the people that supported the YMCA kids. They are awesome to pay lots of money, thousands and thousands of dollars to support us.”

