



From Farm to City in Five Long Months

Sally, a mom to one adult daughter (Sherry) and grandmother to one seven-year-old granddaughter (Heather) was referred to Family Transition Place's (FTP's) Rural Response Counsellor (RRC) via her Mental Health Therapist at the Dufferin Area Family Health Team.

Sally shared with her RRC that in 2015, she gave up the home that she had lived in for many years at the request of Sherry to live with and provide support to

their family. Sally moved in with Sherry, Sherry's husband Rob and their daughter Heather to their horse farm. Sally's source of income was Ontario Disability Support Pension (ODSP); she paid monthly rent for two bedrooms and had access to the rest of the home. Sally was a very active participant on the farm, often caring for the horses and the numerous barn cats and rabbits that Sherry had accumulated. Sally also loved to ride the horses as she had done so her entire life. She also shared that she had provided a lot of childcare for Heather, which allowed Sherry to attend to things off property. Rob worked full time away from the farm.

Sally relayed that she had been diagnosed with depression and anxiety over the last few years and had recently begun dealing with a leg injury that was preventing her from conducting her usual chores on the farm. She had recently been involved in a "fender bender," at which time Sherry took the car away from her and both she and Rob started putting the pressure on her to find alternate living arrangements. She was also no longer allowed to ride the horses. Sally stated that combined with her decline in health and the fact Heather was becoming an age where she didn't need as much support, she felt she no longer served a purpose and was being ushered out.

As time went on, Sally expressed feeling more and more uncomfortable and described as though she were "walking on eggshells" in a home she used to enjoy and was initially welcomed into. She discovered that her food had started to go missing and she would find it in the garbage when it was still perfectly edible. Sally also shared that Heather had also started distancing herself from her and felt that perhaps her granddaughter was picking up on the uncomfortable environment and the change in the relationship between her and Heather's parents. She stated that Rob began to regularly ask her if she had found somewhere else to live and had given her a deadline to secure something.

RRC staff made Sally aware of FTP's shelter services, but because she had a blind 17-year-old dog, she was adamant that she would not access the kennel service arranged through FTP as she felt sure he would pass away without her due to his health issues and needs. Sally stated that she had already been pressured to surrender her cat to the OSPCA by Sherry and Rob (shortly after however, she was able to adopt her back, for a fee, and have a friend take care of her.)

RRC problem solved with Sally as to where she could go safely along with her pets, however there were only a handful of shelters who took women in with their pets and they were all too far north, further isolating

her. She also looked into moving to Barrie to be closer to her sisters (who also couldn't offer her space due to their own family dynamic) and staying in motels, but they were not affordable. Sally stated she would persevere and hang on until priority housing became available in Barrie. She had already applied, prior to accessing RRC.

As the months wore on, RRC provided support on a weekly basis to get Sally to medical appointments, grocery shop and just some plain old socialization, taking her out for lunch and connecting with her to discuss her fears and hopes. Sally shared her anxiety and physical well-being were deteriorating. She was also facing knee surgery, had completed all of the necessary appointments and was just needing to give the doctors the go-ahead to book surgery. Due to the lack of care she would receive at home after her surgery and the fact she needed to have a place to recuperate (without stairs) she was facing having to complete all of the tests again as she was nearing the surgery deadline. Sally stated that things had gotten so bad that she was shopping at dollar stores mostly for food that she could microwave and didn't need to refrigerate as she was no longer allowed to use the kitchen. RRC continued to safety plan, provided Sally with homemade soup that is generously donated to FTP and regularly checked in with Sally via text. RRC picked Sally up and took her to Orangeville weekly. RRC also was able to connect Sally to FTP's Housing and Transitional Support counsellor for support re: housing searches and applications.

Some months along, Sally received a call from Barrie Housing with the wonderful news that she was being offered an apartment in a senior's building that was subsidized rent. Only one week later, Sally was able to arrange movers to move her out of the farm house and into her beautiful apartment in Barrie!

Sally still keeps in touch with RRC to provide an update on how well she is doing. Since her move, Sally has had knee surgery and has been enjoying her new home and taking daily walks by the water. She has also started volunteering at the local food bank and is slowly meeting new people. She is happy to report that she is in touch with Heather and hopes to have her for a weekend sleepover. Sally has expressed much appreciation for that of FTP and its services.