



Dear _____ ,

I never imagined living past the age of 19. Growing up, I didn't feel safe at home. My father lived on the wrong side of the law and never made time for me. My mom worked two jobs to keep our family afloat, and I didn't have the emotional support of my family that every child needs.

Much of my youth was spent alone. I mostly existed in a comatose state and I often contemplated suicide. Our family trailer felt more like hell than a home. I turned to drinking and drugs in middle school. But, I wanted more from life. In eighth grade, I poured myself into learning and I earned a spot on our school's honor roll. But, there was nobody to share in my accomplishment and no reason to think my situation would change.

I began to find hope my freshman year when I was introduced to Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCS) in Kennewick. My teacher at Phoenix High School steered me to the Wraparound with Intensive Services (WISE) program. The staff at LCS listened to me and empowered me to lift myself up. They didn't tell me what to do. They helped me find my voice and create the change that I wanted and needed.

They brought together a team to support me that included my mom. Together, we discovered my strengths and created a plan to overcome my challenges and help me reach my goals. My mental health needs were addressed through therapy. I began to open up about my trauma and started to discover who I am.

My life improved. I became the student body vice president at my school, and followed that with two years as president. I volunteered to help lead the Family and Youth System Partner Round Table (FYSPRT), where I continue to advocate for youth with mental health challenges throughout Washington State. I graduated from the WISE program and from high school. I have opportunities to attend college. I am happy with who I am, and I want to help youth like me overcome their mental health challenges.

When you make a gift to Lutheran Community Services Northwest, you help youth and families throughout the Tri-Cities live better lives. Addressing the mental health needs of our youth makes a stronger and more vibrant community. LCS and WISE are there for youth like me; I feel humbled to know that I'm still learning how to live a happy and healthier life because of the tools I gained while in the program. I am just one of many whose lives have been changed. That is why I am personally asking you to send a gift to LCS today, to make a very real difference for youth and families in our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Baltazar Torres".

Baltazar Torres

P.S. At this very moment, there are youth in our community spiraling into hopelessness, just as I once did. You can make a difference in their lives, and give them a reason to believe in the future. Hurry and send in your gift to Lutheran Community Services Northwest, using the enclosed envelope, or via our secure website: <https://lcsnw.ejoinme.org/>.