

SEPTEMBER 11, 2026

A Story of Strength, Hope, and Paying It Forward

When Amber entered the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) PATH program in June 2025, she arrived with a strong work ethic, a positive attitude, and a determination to create a better future. From the very beginning, she embraced every opportunity, bringing professionalism, resilience, and a willingness to do whatever it took to move forward.

By July, Amber had successfully completed her Application Eligibility Period (AEP) and began participating in her required weekly job search activities. She approached the process with dedication, carefully documenting her efforts each week and remaining focused on her employment goals. Knowing that transportation costs could become a barrier, she reached out for mileage assistance. That support eased some of the financial stress and allowed her to continue concentrating on finding meaningful employment.

As Amber continued working with her Career Coach, they explored additional ways to meet her PATH participation requirements. Wanting to stay active while also making a difference, she chose to volunteer with MI Turning Point Thrift Store. What began as a way to fulfill program hours quickly became something much more. Through her daily volunteer work, Amber built meaningful relationships, strengthened her skills, and found purpose in serving others.

During this same time, life presented one of its greatest challenges. Amber and her son experienced homelessness.

Even while facing the uncertainty of not having stable housing, Amber refused to give up. She continued participating in PATH, showed up to her volunteer position each day, and kept working toward a better future. The staff at MI Turning Point became an important source of encouragement, providing resources and essential supplies to help Amber and her son through an incredibly difficult season.

As if housing instability wasn't enough, another obstacle arose when her vehicle registration and insurance came due. Reliable transportation was critical—not only for her participation in the program, but for caring for her son and accessing community resources. Through PATH supportive services, her Career Coach was able to help cover these expenses, removing another barrier and allowing Amber to keep moving forward.

Along the way, Amber discovered that her own experiences had given her something invaluable—empathy, understanding, and a passion for helping others. She accepted a position with Hope Works Mid-Michigan as a Case Manager, where she now walks alongside individuals experiencing many of the same hardships she once faced, including homelessness. Her journey had come full circle. The challenges she endured became the very experiences that now allow her to connect with and advocate for others.

In March 2026, Amber reached out to her Career Coach with news that funding for her position might be ending. Rather than waiting to see what would happen, she immediately began exploring other employment opportunities. Her proactive approach reflected the confidence, adaptability, and resilience she had built throughout her journey. A few weeks later, she received welcome news—Hope Works Mid-Michigan asked her to remain on staff indefinitely, recognizing the value she brought to both the organization and the people she serves.

Then came one of the most meaningful milestones of all.

In April 2026, Amber shared with her Career Coach that she was officially no longer homeless and had secured stable housing. In her message, she expressed heartfelt gratitude for the guidance, encouragement, and support she had received throughout her PATH journey. She also shared how the knowledge and skills she gained continue to shape the way she serves others every day.

Her impact has been remarkable. At the time of her update, Amber had successfully helped many of the individuals she served secure housing, with additional successes expected as more completed the housing process.

Amber's story is more than a story of overcoming adversity. It is a story of resilience, perseverance, and the life-changing impact of support, opportunity, and believing that circumstances do not define a person's future. From experiencing homelessness herself to helping others find a place to call home, Amber has transformed her challenges into purpose.

Today, she is not only building a brighter future for herself and her son—she is helping countless others build theirs as well.