

Annabelle — Project Hope

Annabelle was working part time when Rhode Island's extended cold weather ran deep into the spring of 2016. The warmer weather that normally brings a reprieve from high heating bills didn't appear until late in the season. Temperatures in April dropped below freezing deep into the month. For most of May, the nighttime temperature dipped into the low 40's.

And as is the case with many of our most vulnerable neighbors, the high costs of living during the cold months in New England can become financially crippling.

Annabelle had to make a choice. Does she use what little resources she has to put food on her table? Or should she go without food so she can pay her utility bills.

Annabelle was able to manage her costs through most of the winter. But when she couldn't find enough hours to work, and the longer the cold lasted, the harder it was to pay her bills. She fell behind on payments, and realized she needed to look for help.

The problem was, the demand for heating and gas assistance was so high last year that most organizations Annabelle contacted were not able to help. She was either lost in a growing pile of applications, or the agencies she turned to had simply run out of money to help.

That's when Annabelle heard about Project Hope, a ministry supported by the Diocese of Providence and the Catholic Charity Appeal.

When Annabelle first called Project Hope, she spoke with Melanie Monteiro.

"I was so desperate and embarrassed. But Melanie made me feel welcome. She understood my problem and told me not to worry. And she didn't make me feel ashamed. It felt good to know that all Melanie wanted to do was help me." said Annabelle.

It was Project Hope, and a caring staff, who helped Annabelle get caught up on her electric and gas bills so she could get back on her feet. Many who struggle in Rhode Island are faced with difficult choices every single day, especially during the winter months when the cost of living can quickly grow out of control. People like Annabelle would rather not have to ask for help.

But when they need somewhere to turn, the ministries supported by the Catholic Charity Appeal are there for them.

Annabelle is grateful for the help she received.

“I thought I would have to wait a long time to get help. I was afraid I would lose my electricity and heat. But everyone at Project Hope was so nice. The help I received happened very fast.” said Annabelle.

She said “Melanie Monteiro and the people who work there really care. They were very kind, and made me feel better about myself. They are wonderful human beings and I thank God for people like them. It makes me happy to know we still have hope and love in the world.”