David’s Story

After a 25-year career, David was laid off, losing his insurance and leaving his family in a precarious situation. Intent on staying afloat, he took a temporary contract job and, after a few months, was offered a full-time position with benefits that would kick in after 90 days.

David had been feeling tired and run down, but he figured those were just signs of age. A month and a half into his new job, he just couldn’t make it through the day. On his lunch break, David went to a clinic where he got the devastating news: he had leukemia. David had worked hard all of his life, supporting his family and putting his kids through school, but without insurance, he and his wife quickly ran through their savings and then their 401ks. Luckily, David responded well to treatment and was out of the hospital in less than a year. He immediately started looking for work, mowing yards and taking odd jobs to help make ends meet and keep up with his medical bills while he searched for something permanent.

A friend saw David struggling and told him that United Way THRIVE might be able to help. David wasn’t sure. “I always felt like, with my own means, I could take care of everything I needed to, and that I would either be smart enough or I’d work hard enough to overcome,” he says. “That just wasn’t working. I had to surrender.” United Way THRIVE counselors helped change David’s perspective and open him up to career possibilities in other fields. He got help making his resume appeal to a wider audience, took job-readiness courses and participated in mock interviews. And, he worked with employment counselors who gave him advice, support, and job leads—including the one that led David to a new career.

These days, David works as a project manager in the oil industry—and is cancer-free. With help from United Way THRIVE, he and his wife have been able to regain their financial stability, but they’ll never forget how easy it was to lose it. “One thing I know is that no one in this world makes it through alone,” David says. “It’s hard to ask for help. It was a humbling experience, but it’s one that we’ve grown from.”