

Every Day Miracles  
"It's all about ME!"

Monique sat on the floor of the playroom with a pile of wrapped gifts next to her. Everyone gathered to watch her open them.

One at a time she opened them, holding up the prize from each package so that everyone could "ooh" and "aah." She loved all of the new clothes and the new purse that was really awesome! But more than anything else, she really loved the attention. Because on this day, it was all about Monique and she knew all of her Blessing House friends were there just for her.

Monique and her brother and sister came to Blessing House because she was unable to stay with her mom for a while. She had been at Blessing House once before for a short stay, but this time she needed to stay for an extended period of time. Monique enjoyed being at Blessing House, and even though she was older than all of the children who were her housemates, she adapted pretty well.

Monique had a charming personality and when the staff was around her, we usually found ourselves chuckling at her unfiltered comments. She did not hesitate to tell us what she thought or what she wanted, yet she was very respectful and thankful for everything she received while at Blessing House.

Monique was at an age where she was very self conscious about how she looked and wanted to make sure she looked good, especially when she went to school. We had some difficulty coming up with enough clothes for her to wear at first because we didn't have many things in her size. But one day we went shopping and she was thrilled as she got to try on and keep several outfits for school. As Monique exited the dressing room and saw the armload of clothes Sr. Mary was carrying to the checkout, she couldn't wait to get back to the house to show off her new outfits.

Monique loved attention. One of her favorite phrases was, "You know it's all about ME!" As a preadolescent, she wasn't always conscious of the needs of others, and she liked to revert to her childlike ways at times. But Monique had been in enough difficult situations to know that she was very fortunate to be at Blessing House and she appreciated everything that was done for her.

Monique had been through much before coming to Blessing House and her experiences left her confused about whether she wanted to be an adult or whether she wanted to find refuge in her childhood. One day she was begging to go to her school dance and then the next she was on the floor playing with dolls. One day she would be quiet and withdrawn, not wanting to participate in anything, and then the next she would sit for hours at the dining room table intently working on her beads as she chatted with the staff. Her emotions were strong, but for the most part, she kept them to herself. It was just easier that way.

Blessing House was a safe place for Monique during a time of transition. She was already struggling with the emotions that accompany growing up. But in addition to worrying about how she looked and having friends, she also had to worry about who she was going to live with, where she was going to live and whether her family was going to be able to stay together. She listened and she processed, trying to figure things out. She wasn't sure who she could trust because the promises made to her in the past weren't always kept. She was glad to be in a place where she knew what to expect each day and where what she thought mattered.

Monique learned much while she was at Blessing House. She learned that people cared, that she would be respected if she respected others, that effort generated results and that she was a special person with a

wonderful sense of humor. Monique learned that vegetables could taste good, that exercise could make you feel better and that finishing homework helped you do better in school. Monique learned that things don't always turn out the way you want them to, but there was always a tomorrow, with a chance to start over.

When Monique left Blessing House, she was unsure of what her future held. She was excited about the possibilities, but fearful that she would be disappointed yet again. We had talked on our daily walk about what she liked and what she wanted to be when she grew up and she was excited as she talked about her dream to work with animals. But that seemed so far away. For now, she just wanted to have someone who agreed with her when she said,

“You know? It’s all about ME!”

Monique promised to write when she left, and she did.

**“P. S. . . . . And I’m doing good!!!”**

