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Social Security Stories Project Story Excerpts

Angela Stockwell
Athens, Maine

“Although money can never replace the love and guidance of a parent, the reality of life is such that money is needed in order to survive. In November of 2003, I lost my 28-year old son in an accident just eight days after he became a father for the first time. Eight days was all he had with his son; eight days to love his infant child. That little boy is now six years old, lives with his Mom in southern Maine, and although he is growing up without his Daddy, his small family is secure in the fact that each month a check will arrive from the Social Security Administration to help defray living expenses.

That small boy will never know his Dad or share the special memories that define the man he will become. He will never share with his Dad the thrill of walking through the woods on junior hunting day in search of the great white-tailed deer; the thrill of casting his line into the waters to catch the ever elusive trout; or learning how to drive on the back roads of Maine. He will learn truth, honesty, and the American spirit from someone else. I am saddened that my son is no longer with us; I am saddened that my grandson has to grow up without his Daddy; but I am grateful that a program which began 75 years ago still exists today to help struggling families deal financially with the loss of a loved one.

Could one have imagined that a program begun in the 1930s during the Roosevelt Administration would still be providing financial support three-quarters of a century later to millions of American across this country? Matthew will only know his Daddy through the memories of others, but he will always know that Social Security will be there for him until he becomes a young man, all because socially conscious people like Frances Perkins and Franklin Roosevelt had a vision for the care of America’s elderly and its needy children. What a legacy!”

Evonne Zalewski
Greendale, Wisconsin

“In 1962 my father died at the age of 42 from lung cancer, leaving my mother (42), brother (10) and me (14). My father became ill in August, had surgery in October and died in January. In less than six months, my mother was suddenly faced with mortgage payments, hospital bills, and supporting two children.



social security STORIES PROJECT

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The funeral director in our small town (Cedarburg, WI) told my Mom about benefits available from Social Security that would help her. I remember my Mom telling me how this will help so much and that we will not be poor or have to move. Having grown up during the depression with only food stamps available was terrifying for my Mom.

In my senior year in high school I decided that I wanted to be a nurse. At that time student nurses couldn't have a job while attending school. I felt my dreams being crushed. Where would I be able to get the money for tuition without being able to work? The guidance counselor suggested my Mom check to see if the Social Security benefits would help pay for my tuition. We found out that these benefits would continue until I graduated!...

....I have cared for so many children and adults, mentored young nurses, collaborated with health care professionals to improve our health care system and continue to give back to society. I am not the only one that was on the receiving end of this benefit. My life would have been a lot different without this benefit from Social Security."

Brian Lundquist
South Portland, Maine

"My mother passed away when I was six years old, leaving my father to care for six children ranging in age from 6 to 16. He worked very hard to provide for us and to keep our family together, which was difficult, as being a single father was not common at the time...

Often it felt like a battle. Are we going to be homeless? Are we going to be separated?

Social Security provided a critical bit of ammunition against poverty."