

**I believe in my community.**

**I believe that its success depends on the people who live in it.**

**That everyone has something to contribute.**

**That everyone deserves respect.**

**That everyone's potential can be realized.**

**That diversity is vital.**

**That every person has value.**

**That everyone needs help and everyone can offer help.**

**That a safe, supportive community is everyone's responsibility.**

**I believe in possibility.**



**United Way**  
Northern British Columbia  
Investing in Northern BC Communities

## **RANDY'S STORY**

Randy peered out from behind the couch – he had scrambled into his 'hiding place' again. In the shadowy darkness, nestled between the couch and the wall, Randy would shut his eyes – hard – and try to make the angry voices go away.

The first four years of the marriage was like a fairy tale – John was the perfect husband – attentive, considerate and always willing to give Sara a hand.

Shortly after Randy's birth, John seemed to change - he was staying out late almost every night – AND when he was home was always angry. No matter what Sara did, it never was good enough for John.

Arguments grew into intense yelling matches – and would always end when John used his brute strength to dominate Sara - and Randy would seek the 'hiding place' behind the couch to protect him from the violence.

Randy was always there - watching his mom and dad. Learning the roles that abusing husband and abused wives act out - these "tapes" would play back in his mind - over and over.

Randy, from his hiding place, watched the events unfold as though he was watching a picture show. His mind would spin – feelings of fear and anger were all mixed together. Randy wanted his mom and dad to stop the screaming and his dad to stop hurting his mom.

Most parents are not aware that during the first five years of a child's life, children are like sponges - programmed to absorb everything that they see and hear.

Now in grade 2, Randy is always at the center of every playground argument or fight. Randy's teachers also noticed that he was rough with the girls in his class – he would order them around and if they didn't do exactly what he told them to do – he would use his superior strength to make them do what he demanded.

Randy needed desperately to tell someone – anyone – his 'secret'.

Every year hundreds of children are helped to deal with their feelings of fear, anger and guilt as a result of witnessing violence in their family home. Without help, these children will grow into adulthood with violence as the only pattern that they know – and they will seek out or create relationships in which force and violence are the primary ways they deal with those they care about and love.

United Way works to improve the quality of life of all ages. We fund services and agencies that provide information and referrals, resource material to parents and professionals; create a public and professional awareness about the needs of those in our community; encourage government legislation; promote diagnosis and treatment programs; and encourage planning and program development.

Your support will help ensure that thousands of children, youth and adults receive the support they need to achieve their maximum potential and live with dignity in their communities.

Randy did get help. The therapeutic group, funded by United Way of Northern British Columbia, for children who witness abuse could not erase all the images that Randy's mind played over and over again. BUT with the therapist's help and support, Randy grew in confidence and was able to talk about his feelings of anger, fear and guilt.

Randy and his mom are now a family – they no longer live with John or fear his abuse. Randy is feeling more confident and his teachers have noted that he no longer uses his physical size to get his way and actually defends the girls in his class.

"Most days this house is filled with children expressing sadness, confusion, and anger at their life experiences. Through the support of United Way, I feel a strong message of community commitment and dedication to end violence and abuse in the lives of children. This sense of caring is a breath of fresh air."

– Barb, Children Who Witness Abuse Program

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEBSITE:**

[www.unitedwaynbc.ca](http://www.unitedwaynbc.ca)

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