

## The Need

**Meet Maxi B. and his best girl, Nefertiti**, pictured above. Maxi had a job and they had a place to live. Not long ago Maxi ran into credit problems and lost his home. The pressures of being homeless caused Maxi to lose his job soon thereafter and he has not been able to find a new one. It's not that he doesn't want one, but it is hard to get a job when you are out on the streets with no phone, no address, and no transportation. Can you imagine having a 9 a.m. interview but having no way to shower, brush your teeth or shave before you go?

Maxi and Nefertiti come to see us often. Maxi always manages to find food and water for Nefertiti first, taking care of his family before himself. She waits patiently in the shade while he joins us for a meal or comes upstairs to check his mail. If Maxi needs to see Ms. Williams, our case manager, use the shower or make phone calls to line up interviews he gingerly carries Nefertiti in her crate up to our offices and together they wait. Wait for a chance for a better life, wait for an opportunity to have a real home again, wait to be seen, to be noticed, and to be heard.

That's how we usually see Maxi and Nefertiti - patiently finding their way through each day with a kind word ready to be spoken, a tail ready for wagging and lives ready to be changed. Perhaps we should say that's how we used to see Maxi and Nefertiti. Last week when Maxi asked to see Ms. Williams it was with a story to tell. He had found a job. Not just any job, but a job as an electrician's apprentice. A job with training in a good field with good wages and a solid future. A job that filled him with pride and hope and us all with joy.

As Maxi related his news to Ms. Williams she heard more than just the story of the job. She heard Maxi's determination to walk to work each day farther than most of us walk in a month. She heard his story and thought of another's. The story of an aging man in desperate need of his disability payments to buy food, pay his mortgage and keep his lights on. His name is Hector and he had tried to secure his disability payments for months with no success. He met with Ms. Williams who investigated his case and discovered that Hector had simply completed the forms incorrectly. Ms. Williams sat with Hector to help him complete and resubmit the forms. His claim was approved and a few weeks later he received his first check. A few days after that he was back in our offices with a check for us, a donation to help another in need. It might have been a modest amount for many, but for Hector it was quite a sacrifice. For us it was the perfect amount on the perfect day.

You see Hector and his check arrived the same day Maxi, Nefertiti and their great news did. The check was just enough to buy Maxi a bus pass for a month, just long enough for him to earn a few paychecks and buy his own bus pass for the next month. It was just enough to start him down the road to success. Hector and Maxi have never met and they probably never will, but that doesn't matter. Their actions, which may seem small to some, have created a ripple of change and hope that will continue to spread throughout the community, enabling others to start their own ripples of change.

And Nefertiti? She's still Maxi's best girl, reminding us to see and love each other as we are, without judgment, without malice and without condition.