

## **Farah Sadeghi**

### **Bellevue, Tenn.**

A young, 18-year-old girl's dream was to move to another country with her husband and children to be able to gain better opportunities. She dreamt of her kids receiving the best education, and the thought of living in America felt unreal to her. Finally, when she was married with a 5-year-old son, the transition to the United States began.

Farah Sadeghi of Bellevue, Tenn., left her family, house, and memories behind to achieve better opportunities for her growing family. She entered another world, where the streets felt unfamiliar to her, the English language sounded like gibberish, and worst of all, the voices of her family members were only heard through a telephone. Adjusting wasn't a choice, but rather, the only way she and her family could live in another country comfortably. After years spent struggling to access adequate healthcare for herself and her family due to language barriers and economic factors, she spoke with THCC intern Ludavica Rezanejad.

"I spend most of my time at the YMCA. To some, it seems boring and a nuisance, but to me, it's another way to cope with reality, get away from my thoughts, and the best way to ease my pain. The little girl in me still loves to shop for home decor and clothes, and that's where I spend the rest of my free time. I think I've reached the point in my life where I have just accepted my position. My gratitude for what God has given me is beyond reach, and I live each day thanking God for my children and the little things that God has given me. Not much has yet gone the way I had hoped a country across Persia would bring, but I can only be thankful.

I had only dreamt of the United States to be my home for what it had to offer. I envisioned success and health for my kids, husband and me. Nothing is ever as easy as it seems. It was expected for the first couple years in the United States to be difficult – my husband worked overtime every day as a restaurant cook to be able to support his family. Language became a major barrier for us; everything was out of reach because we didn't have anyone to assist us in the basics of living life. Neither of us had access to health insurance, which was the minimum, from my perspective, that this country had to offer. Our only source of income was my husband, who covered the basics of cost of living – groceries, rent, etc. My main concern was my 5-year-old son at the time. I didn't mind spending days and nights in pain (whose cause was

unknown.) Health insurance was far beyond reach for all of us to have. My second daughter was born in 1996, then finally, my youngest daughter in 2003. Thankfully, a friend and interpreter helped us acquire health insurance when my youngest daughter was born. Little did I know that the years of living without health insurance had accumulated a list of conditions that I didn't even understand. Women are to be screened frequently for various cancers that can happen over time, (and) nutritionists and exercise regimes are essential in living a healthy and pain-free life, all of which I was deprived of because of language and insurance barriers. In my mid-fifties, all of my conditions hit that were building up over time. Cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, high blood pressure, were all new to me – and I had to register the fact that this accumulated because of the years that I lived without insurance.

This luxury didn't stay for long, my husband and my coverage was terminated once my youngest daughter came of age. (The Sadeghi family received their healthcare coverage through BlueCare Tennessee when their children were young. BlueCare is a TennCare health plan that provides health insurance to lower-income pregnant women, parents of children under 21, seniors and people receiving long-term care services, or who live in nursing homes and earn less than \$2,205 a month.) She wasn't a minor anymore, and my husband's income was 'sufficient' and didn't fall in the category of BlueCare. (Being in the coverage gap) felt like living a nightmare that I had once lived before. No health insurance would cover my medical needs comfortably. I simply didn't have the money to pay the out-of-pocket price for the medications and doctors visits that I needed. I went through the process of getting disability benefits. That took nearly two years. I was eligible and enrolled in disability benefits, but it was only for a limited time. A \$5 increase in my husband's income terminated the benefits after a couple months. We had to pay back the money that I had received through disability benefits. There was no way I could come up with that specific amount of money in a short period of time. Why would I even file for disability if I were to return the money? I could see myself degrading in front of my children. Why is health insurance so hard to get? Is health the same price as one's income? After a while, I was able to get Social Security benefits through my husband, but still not adequate health insurance, considering my conditions.

To this day, there still is a language barrier. Unfortunately, I have yet to consider myself as part of a community that shares the same barriers as me. There aren't many organizations in my area that offer assistance with my medical needs and basic health necessities, like coverage.

My daughter assists me with all of my doctor appointments, payments and other information. Thankfully, I have health insurance that covers my basic medical appointments and coverage, but the fear of having it terminated is with me every day.

I am happy that I can see my children thrive in their personal lives, and I wish them a future unlike mine. I'm very thankful for what I have today, but life is full of surprises that I have no control over. I spend the majority of my days at the YMCA to get my mind off of the fear that is buried in me. The land that I once thought was full of opportunities turned into a series of unfortunate events, but I thank God for where I am today. I am able to see my children grow. My children are the reason that I am still pushing through."

Every day is a surprise for Sadeghi. Her daily visits to the YMCA, seeing her friends and spending time in the warm sauna, bring her joy. It's the little things that keep her happy and take her mind off reality.