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TRUE STORY

move upstairs. I remained in the cellar, and I wasn't allowed to shower unless I paid extra.

A couple of months later, I came home from work and the others were waiting for me – they accused me of stealing New Kids memorabilia and had tossed my belongings into the snow. I wasn't the thief in the house, but it didn't matter. They wanted me out. I had nowhere to go, and payday was two days off. I sat down in front of a store and counted my change. I couldn't remember the last time I'd eaten. I had no coat, no gloves or hat; the soles of my shoes were worn through. Then a van pulled up beside me. It belonged to a shelter. The driver asked me to come with him, and I did. I spent two nights there, then went to McDonald's to collect my last paycheck. I didn't have enough money to make it to Kentucky. However, my paycheck was \$2 more than the price of a ticket to my grandparents' home in Maryland. They agreed to take me in, and I got a job cleaning hotels.

I worked for a couple of years and started college in Kentucky three months shy of my 21st birthday. I was four years older than most of my classmates. I felt out of place – they partied; I studied. I instinctively began to lie about my background just to make friends. But then I remembered what I learned in Boston: "Fitting in" isn't all it's cracked up to be. I had my own unique past, and I was proud of it. I'd been poor, and I was richer for it. I didn't need to run.

Today, I live in Boston again, and I like it a lot better this time around. I'm a college graduate with a job at the *Boston Globe* and a roof over my head. And, yes, it might not be cool anymore – but I still have a soft spot in my heart for the New Kids on the Block.

Leslie Sampson works at the Boston Globe store and lives in Dorchester.