Raul was trying to make life better for his family when he unexpectedly found himself on the receiving end of help.

It's hard to hear the word "cancer" when you're 25 years old.
I had a purpose when I moved here.

My parents still live in Guatemala, and I wanted to help make their lives a little easier. It was so hard to understand why I had to get sick.

I work as a line cook and don’t get health insurance, so I waited too long to go to the doctor. By the time I went to urgent care, the pain was so bad that I couldn’t even sleep.

Without parents nearby to help me face three surgeries and chemotherapy, my picture of family expanded. I moved in with my aunt and uncle and they never left my side; coworkers helped with rides and picked up medication; and in the hospital, I got to know Life with Cancer counselor, David McGuiness. In his free time, he volunteers at Arlington Free Clinic, so he quickly recognized my need for a place like this.

I landed in a medical home. Arlington Free Clinic coordinated with my surgeon and oncologists; my counselor helped me rebuild when I lost hope; and everyone celebrated with me when I responded so well to treatment. Now, the dentist is even repairing the damage chemotherapy did to my mouth.

I crossed paths with so many incredible people over the past 15 months. While cancer changed me, I’m young and grateful to my vast, extended family that I can look forward to a full life, fulfilling the mission that motivated me to come here.

If you’ve already given this year, we send you our heartfelt thanks. If not, your year-end gift will help us continue to provide essential care to Arlingtonians in need.

Go green! Visit www.arlingtonfreeclinic.org and click “donate” to give online.