

"To help put a family back on its feet," says Jack (with Cindy and her kids Zarah and Zachary), "is the greatest feeling in the world."



# HE RESCUED A FAMILY FROM THE STREET

## **Jack Keenan, 43,** *Chicago*

Watching her children Zachary, 10, and Zarah, 4, asleep in the back seat of her SUV one morning last September, Cindy Almendarez broke down and wept. "What kind of mother," she thought, "lets her kids live in a truck?"

Two years after her husband, Jymmy Perez, died in a car crash, Cindy, 41, had struggled. Suffering from depression, she held a series of jobs before losing a position with a temp agency; unable to pay her rent, she was evicted from her apartment. For the next five months, the family huddled in Cindy's Chevy Blazer and homeless shelters. "Zarah would cry, and Zach would have nightmares," she says. "I felt like a nothing, a nobody."

Then businessman Jack Keenan read a newspaper article about Cindy's plight—and resolved to help. "I thought, 'What if they were my kids and wife?'" says the father of three. He tracked Cindy down and helped her find a two-bedroom apartment; he's been paying the \$750 monthly rent since January and has promised to continue the support for a year if necessary. He also recruited 40 friends and coworkers, who have helped pay Cindy's utility bills and have donated appliances and a bunk bed. These days the kids are sleeping peacefully in their bunks, and Cindy, who spends days in the library trolling for job leads, is hopeful again. "Jack," she says, "has lifted up my whole family."

By **Anne Lang** and **Kristen Mascia**

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