

I have lived in Appleton, WI for most of my life. I have been out of state a couple of times, but nothing fascinating to explore. I became a juvenile delinquent in the Outagamie County Health and Human services real quick – hanging out with the wrong crowd. In the beginning of my senior year of high school (September of 2008), I applied to the Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities for a living arrangement for myself.

So you may ask, what does the Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities do? Well, in my case, I was a mother of two young children at the age of sixteen. Yes, sixteen; a child myself trying to raise another child. I was taken away from my mother's care at the age thirteen through the Outagamie County Health and Human services. With that said, I have always been living with relatives; mainly, my grandmother or great aunt. I thank them sincerely for all their support and guidance. I think without them... I wouldn't have grown to become so wise. Being a child with no particular "discipline" or "encouragement" it was very hard to grow up in the mist of adulthood. Moving from relative to relative – wasn't exciting and/or even promising as a child; I occasionally wondered where my next step was, or my next house...

In the meantime, I finished high school early. I graduated in January of 2009 at Appleton West, here in the Fox Cities. I was tired of being judged as a mother of two children still in high school. So I decided to check out early – and graduated. I was almost 18 and tired of people rushing me into adulthood because I was almost no longer a teenager, yet a parent as well. When I turned 18, I moved out to my baby's daddy's house in Sheboygan, WI. It was hard to find employment; and in God's luck, Housing Partnership had called in May of 2009. Then, I was offered a Certified Nursing Assistant position in Sheboygan, WI and offered a house from the Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities in Appleton, WI – the decision was hard to make, but I always wanted more in my future... so I chose the Housing Partnership.

I was excited to get my first duplex at the age of 18 out on my own. I was glad to have so many services within the Housing Partnership. There are many things you have to accomplish with the dedicated staff that Housing Partnership offers. These items include: budgeting, making monthly goals, house inspections, yard work, and authorized overnights. Many people would complain – but this is what I loved about Housing Partnership. As a young woman with old habits to break from teenage years – this program taught me a lot about ownership (especially at such a young age).

I loved budgeting! It helped me understand that I was the "owner" of these bills. With that I became cautious of what I would spend and it also taught me what bills were "most important." (Meaning, if I didn't pay rent – I wouldn't have a roof over my head or not paying my credit card – making my interest rates kick in). So on top of paying bills, I knew there was more work within myself to work on... I wanted to go to school, I needed

child care, and I needed a vehicle; so that's where monthly goals come in. They were measurable goals that I would reach; such as getting my school application in, or calling my case worker for the county to make ends meet, or even just meeting with a dedicated staff member from Housing Partnership for advice. When you talk about deadlines, that's when house inspections, yard work and authorized overnights came in. Sure, everyone wants a clean house, but that's easier said, than done. Housing inspections and yard work kept tenants in check and made sure their homes were in good condition to live in.

With being in the Transitional Housing program for two years, I graduated and moved into the Affordable Housing category. It was my "real" time to shine to know what skills I picked up from the dedicated staff of the Housing Partnership from the previous program. I again had the excitement of being on my own this time it meant having ownership of a new "remodeled" house with an extra bedroom more than in my last house. Because I came from such a rough childhood and was such a determined teenager, mother, and woman; I knew that I wanted to not only enhance my future, but my kids' futures as well.

Nevertheless, I have kept all the skills (such as: budgeting, goals for myself, yard/house work) I learned from the Housing Partnership staff. From time to time, I do slip slightly, but I know that I have to pick myself up again because I know that I cannot depend on anybody but me (also called responsibility ☺). After you have all the "ownership of being homeowner" knowledge – you start to find out a lot about yourself, such as your strengths, your weaknesses and even career goals. You start to become stable with a place to live and call your own, but now you want to dedicate yourself to employment. Meanwhile, you start thinking on the "upper level" and start making "higher" goals, but still make them reachable as well.

Currently, I am the most stable person in my family. I have been known to have "a safe place" to be. I have recently found new faith and have found a great job that suits my personality. I am now working for the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley and now am giving back to my community; which is such a great feeling! I am now twenty years old, with two beautiful girls; a four year old and a two year old; and am successfully moving my way up on my big dreams. Without Housing Partnership, I don't think I would have such great expectations for my new home versus being a homeowner without the "Housing Partnership" experience. Thank you Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities!!! ☺