



Supportive Housing Works

Permanent supportive housing describes apartments designed for individuals with limited income and special needs, and is a primary strategy to ending homelessness. "Permanent" means housing secured by a lease, with rights and responsibilities for the leaseholder.

"Supportive" means that the tenant has easy access to services, which may include mental health and addictions treatment, primary health care, and financial management.

Housing for New Hope manages forty units of permanent supportive housing at Sherwood Park and Andover Apartments, with twenty-four more units at Williams Square Apartments opening in April. This housing provides opportunities for recovery and growth, and for some, like Gail and Michael, a stepping stone to homeownership.

Michael's Story

by Michael Kelly

Four weeks ago, Michael Kelly moved out of Andover Apartments, where he lived for more than three years, and into his own home, through Habitat for Humanity of Durham.

There is no good way to explain how I feel about my new Habitat home. I could use words like excited, happy, overjoyed, even exhilarated, but that just wouldn't cut it. Mary Poppins said, "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious", and that might be close.

Everyone has been so supportive of me over the past few years. It seems like yesterday I was sitting in the woods asking God what was going to happen next.

Housing for New Hope staff would visit and bring me stuff in my "house" in the woods. Today, they are helping me decorate my new home.

I just feel overwhelmed by the fact that in less than four years, with the help of Housing for New Hope, I have gone from living in the woods to being a homeowner. I could not do that in the first fifty years of my life with my old ways of thinking.

I have made many friends along the journey, and each time I have made my own little community. When I left the woods, I was afraid to leave my homeless friends. The truth was that I was afraid of being alone because I was used to having a family, and the homeless community was the only family I had.

I have mixed feelings about leaving my community at Andover, too. But I can go back to visit. And I have learned that as I recover my life, that in turn opens up another spot for someone else to enter into the recovery process, and life gets better for everyone. That means one more homeless person getting an affordable, supportive place to live.



Colleague Cynthia Harris makes sure Michael's new home is well stocked with his favorite beverage.

Gail's Story

Recently, Gail became a homeowner. She moved into a two-bedroom house in East Durham, made available through Durham Housing Authority's Turnkey Program.

"It had always been a dream of mine," she said.

Five years ago, that dream seemed like it would never come true. Gail was homeless and suffered from a mental illness. Her caseworker brought her to Housing for New Hope's newly-opened Andover Apartments. Gail remembers it well.

"It was winter. All I had was a garbage bag full of summer clothes. That's it."

Anticipating tenants' limited resources, apartments at Andover come fully furnished and equipped with necessary housewares. That helped Gail a lot. What also helped were the below-market rent and links to supportive services.

Rent at Andover is based on thirty percent of tenant income and includes utilities. Gail paid \$297 a month. Her mental health provider offered, among other things, budgeting classes, "which were very helpful. I dedicated myself to saving money, and it paid off."

While at Andover, Gail obtained employment, bought a car, and opened a bank account. During four-plus years at Andover, Gail's mental health also improved considerably, to the point where now she no longer requires ongoing case management.

Moving out of Andover "has been sweet and sour." Gail loves having her own home. But she misses the community. Her best friend still lives there, and Gail goes back frequently to visit.

"Living at Andover was a great experience. I wouldn't be where I am today without it."

Supportive Housing Needs Your Support

In three years, "Penny for Housing" from the City of Durham has helped people like Gail and Michael make a new start. It also provided critical funding for the development of Williams Square.

This will be a difficult budget year. Please take a moment to sign an online petition (www.ipetitions.com/petition/pennyforhousing/) asking the Durham City Council to continue to fund affordable and special needs housing in our community.