



Nalda Bought a House!

Nalda (her name has been changed to protect her privacy) has a sparkling personality and is extremely optimistic. She is determined to provide ample opportunities for education and success for her four children. Her family has lived at People's Emergency Center (PEC) for nine years.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, she moved to Philadelphia with her husband and three children when she was 19. Their fourth child was born in Philadelphia. After she and her husband separated, meeting basic needs for her family was very difficult. She had no family to help her in Philadelphia. Nalda had a ninth-grade education and spoke very little English. Lack of housing stability meant that she was in danger of losing custody of her children. Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services referred them to PEC in 2011 so that they could stay together.

"When you don't know where to go and you have children it's very stressful and you feel very alone," Nalda said.

When she arrived at PEC she was scared, overwhelmed, and literally in tears. She thought that shelters were unsafe. PEC staff were caring, and fair. Nalda began to feel more comfortable. In about a week she realized she had made the best decision for her family.

With housing stabilized, food and clothing for her children, and the older children enrolled in school, Nalda dedicated her time and energy to participating in every program in PEC's holistic array of services. She was an active participant in case management. Parenting education on child development and an assessment for learning delays revealed a speech delay for her 11-month-old. Her case manager connected Nalda to resources for speech therapy with a bilingual therapist who would come on-site to work with her and the baby. She learned English and obtained her GED.

Within eight months Nalda was ready to move to permanent supportive housing, the next opportunity for her family. The children were excited to have their own rooms. PEC helped them get beds and cabinets. Nalda was able to focus on her education and career planning so that one day she could be independent and care for her family on her own. Nalda found part-time work as a home health aide and sought her associate degree in Applied Science. PEC's computer classes helped her to manage her college workload. After Nalda received her degree, she secured a full-time job in phlebotomy. She also earned certificates in phlebotomy, medical assistance, and CPR/AED.



“They helped me, but I had to do my part to grow”, she says. “If you don’t help yourself how can anyone else help you? PEC staff would build you a bridge – you had to choose to go across or go back.”

Now, nine years after coming to PEC’s shelter, Nalda wants more stability for her children. Although she has been successful in permanent supportive housing she is driven to get to the next level, both in housing and career. She told her case manager that her new goals are to pursue a bachelor’s degree in nursing and buy her first home. Nalda wants to have property to leave to her children – a place that they can always call home. PEC has several options to help someone prepare to purchase their first home – financial management workshops, financial counseling, and the Home Ownership and Maintenance Initiative – and she completed all three programs. Then we connected Nalda with another provider for housing counseling. She purchased her first home in December!

Her children share her positive outlook and enthusiasm for their futures. Her oldest (16) son is wrestling at regional and state levels, runs track and plays football. He plans to get a sports scholarship to help pay for college. Her second son wants to be an actor. He performed in three school shows – even the lead role of Simba in Lion King. He is in line for a scholarship to art school. Her daughter also likes dancing and was in Lion King. Nalda’s youngest is 10 and loves to draw. He wants to go to MIT to study science and become an inventor.

Now she is confident and ready for the next step. Nalda will complete the housing counseling program this summer and start the homebuying process.

“The most important thing that I gained at PEC was a bridge to my dreams. PEC helped me find the right path – continuing my education – and I will be able to walk across to them.”

Sandra Moved from Shelter to an Apartment

Sandra (fictitious name) and her three school-aged children moved into our emergency shelter in March, a week before quarantine was enforced. Working with PEC’s Career Developer, she applied to a local distribution center for work and was hired. PEC staff helped Sandra purchase a work uniform and gloves to get her started. After securing childcare and transportation, Sandra focused on a housing search. Keeping an open mind to all the possible places to build a life for her family, she applied for a housing voucher in another state— and was approved! Our career developer is helping Sandra position herself for advancement opportunities. ***Sandra keeps a positive attitude no matter the obstacle that she is facing in the shelter, with her children, or at work.*** Sandra is hopeful, driven, and resilient. She is grateful to know that her children are living in a safe place and well cared for when she is working. Her most fervent wish was to find permanent housing before New Year’s. – and she signed her lease in December!



Shayna Avoided Eviction

Shayna (fictitious name) loved her job managing activities for seniors in a nursing home. When the COVID19 hit, she was laid off. By August her savings were gone, and she struggled to provide her four-year-old son with basic needs. Shayna faced another setback when she was hit by a car in September. She quickly fell further behind on rent and needed assistance. PEC provided the rental assistance that Shayna needed. When she was physically able Shayna started a new job and was thrilled to be stable once again!

Greta Bought a House

After residing in PEC's temporary housing, Greta (fictitious name) and her three children moved to our affordable apartments for families with members with a disability – her own behavioral disorder. Greta has maintained employment since moving in. Ten years ago, one of Greta's adult sons was killed. She leaned into her #resilience to overcome her loss, remain stable, and keep her family together. Finally, Greta decided to pursue homeownership. Greta and her now adult children moved within a few months, and recently celebrated their first year in a home of their own.

Elaine Moved to Safer Housing

Elaine (fictitious name) is a single mother and a teacher. In addition to providing virtual learning for her students, she assists her own children with their virtual schooling at home. The apartment she rented developed black mold that put their health in danger, especially her youngest, who suffers from asthma. Elaine drained her savings when she attempted to remedy the mold, after her landlord refused to fix it and threatened her with eviction. Elaine wanted to find a new apartment, but although she could afford her rent, she could not pull together a deposit. With PEC's help to cover security deposit and first and last month's rent, Elaine was able to move into a new apartment within two weeks of applying for the program. She and her children are now healthy and happy in a mold-free home.

Kristy's Voice was Heard

Kristy (fictitious name) came to PEC three years ago with one son, Mark (fictitious name), living with her. He was diagnosed with a disability. She demonstrated #resilience in the face of several denied affordable housing applications, due to her lack of income and past convictions. The impact of the pandemic strained Mark's ability to function well at home and in school (now virtual). Kristy was under treatment for anxiety, so becoming disconnected from both of their therapeutic resources caused additional stress during quarantine. They struggled to obtain



accommodations from the school district required by Mark's individual education plan. Kristy was patient and a strong advocate for her son's needs.

During this time, Kristy appealed the latest denial for subsidized housing. Thanks to Kristy's diligence, and the help of her case manager, she was finally able to overturn the denial and obtain affordable housing last month. PEC assisted her with a security deposit, housewares, and a resource for furnishings. Finally, they were able to come home after many years and many closed doors.