



A “Hand Up” Not a Hand Out

Sam* had a lot to be thankful for - a good marriage, beautiful children, a job and a home. But his life changed drastically when he was seriously injured at work and declared 100% disabled. Soon after, his wife, Melissa, was diagnosed with cancer and became disabled as well. When she died, Sam was left with a broken heart, children to care for, and just half of the income he had before tragedy struck. More adversity came his way when his home was seized during the national foreclosure crisis. With little money in his pocket, all he could afford was a move into a rental

house, which also went into foreclosure. When a new owner bought the property from the bank, Sam and his children were evicted and homeless.

Through all of his troubles, Sam had held his family together, but homelessness now threatened to rip them apart. The thought of losing his kids was too much for Sam to bear.

His life took a turn for the better the day he met a Broward County ChildNet Supervisor and a ChildNet Child Advocate who told him about HEART. After being selected for the initiative, Sam and his children received a housing assistance voucher through the Broward Housing Authority, financial counseling from the Broward County Urban League, and family counseling from their HEART Case Manager.

It hasn't always been smooth sailing in their current home in Pompano Beach, but knowing his HEART Case Manager, Ms. Zelamna Taveras, “has his back” makes all the difference to Sam. He credits her for helping him access the security deposit for his new home and strengthening his family through her guidance. She pulled together the down-payment needed to keep his electric on, and went above and beyond her responsibilities when she brought school supplies and holiday gifts to his children. Whether assisting with counseling appointments or lending a sympathetic ear, Sam says Ms. Taveras is critical to his family's stability.

“The story for us is that HEART, and the community of people, programs and resources behind them, has been a “hand up” when we needed it most. HEART is not about hand-outs; they want to make sure we have the foundation in place to stabilize and strengthen our family for years to come.”

**Names have been changed to respect the privacy of family members.*

