
Lena's Story



Lena, 35, has been living at Harbor House for five months after her brother's wife suggested she contact us to escape her physically abusive partner, who not only beat her daily, but also was engaged in drugs and gang activity. She has four daughters and two granddaughters with her. As an African American woman in a primarily white community, Lena was fearful at first, but has grown and seen positive changes in herself and her children since they've been here. She has obtained some on-the-job work experience through the Women Obtaining Work (WOW) initiative in collaboration with GoodWill and is looking for a full-time job. She recently was accepted for affordable housing and will be moving out with her family within the next month. In her own words, this is how Lena describes her experiences at Harbor House:

"I was scared, very scared, when I first came here! I didn't know anybody. I'm from Chicago and I'm black. Most of the people here are white, so I didn't know what to think. I started off just afraid and angry.

Ms. Carla came into the room to do my intake, talk with me and just made me feel welcome, no matter what my color was. I thank her for that! Harbor House has been such a blessing to me and my girls. Everything about us has changed—everything.

I know now that I have a choice in relationships—and I control me. I deserve better than what I was getting and that was me being beaten almost every day. I'm better than that, I deserve better and I will get better! Thank God for this place.

My dreams for the future are to go to school to get my degree in drug counseling. I would like to buy a home, put my girls through college and just live right—without being afraid.

The changes I see in my girls—my God!—a whole lot! They know they don't have to always put their fists up and it's OK to let their guards down a little. I hope they stay in school and get what they need out of school so they can succeed in life."
