



Sharon Parsons story is one of survival. She was abandoned by her parents at an early age, struggled with addiction for more than 20 years and was in and out of jail during that time. In May 2013, Parsons began a one year jail sentence, and it was during that time she decided it was time to turn her life around.

“Prior to that year, the longest I had spent in jail at one time was a couple of months,” Parsons said. “It was different this time. I was different. And as soon as I got out, I went to The Next Door for help.”

The Next Door is a faith based nonprofit organization that provides services for women and their families impacted by addiction, mental illness, trauma and/or incarceration. After graduating from The Next Door’s six-month recovery program, Parsons moved into a brand new affordable housing apartment complex developed by New Level Community Development Corporation (CDC).

“These eight units are targeted to help people who are finishing up a program and need the next step,” said Kay Bowers, New Level CDC executive director. “They are working, but don’t have the earning capacity yet to rent market-rate housing. To maintain stability, housing costs must be affordable for their current income level.”

November will mark one year since Parsons moved into her place, and that stability has made all the difference. She’s received a raise at her job and been offered a manager trainee position.

“Without this opportunity, I would have probably wound up back on drugs and back in jail,” said Parsons. “Having a home has given me my life back. It has been a blessing.”

That blessing would not have been possible without the HOME Investment Partnerships Program. HOME funded 95 percent of the New Level CDC project, and is one of the few resources that can be used for the construction of affordable housing. Yet despite a need for more affordable housing, a proposed Senate bill for fiscal year 2016 cuts the HOME program by 93 percent. Here in Nashville, funding could drop from \$1.7 million in 2015 to \$126 thousand in 2016. At this level, the program would not be viable.



New Level CDC Executive Director Kay Bowers said HOME funding not only helps people like Sharon, it's also the right financial decision.

“In Tennessee, it costs about \$30,000 a year to keep someone incarcerated. According to a recent study that's also the total cost of a homeless individual cycling in and out of our government and health care systems,” said Bowers. “HOME funding actually saves our city and state money, and allows us to provide the stability of a home to individuals in our community working to get back on their feet. It's a win for all.”

Parsons said she just hopes others will be given the same opportunity she was given nearly a year ago.

“All we need is a little help and a chance,” said Parsons. “My life is forever changed because of the opportunities provided to me.”

More About HOME:

The HOME program is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and operated by the Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency (MDHA) on behalf of the city of Nashville.

Since the program's inception more than 20 years ago, Nashville has been awarded more than \$65 million in HOME funds, which have been used to produce or preserve more than 4,400 affordable homes in Nashville.

For more information, visit <http://Nashville-MDHA.org/Save-HOME>.