

Help with Housing

By Kevin Fritz

The Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida helped Cora Medina rise from the abyss to a home with her five children.

Cora Medina has had a life not many would envy. Abandoned by her parents, abused in a foster home, a dropout and a runaway at age 15, a street life rife with drugs and alcohol, five children, but no husband. By her late 20s, she had lost the only roof over her head.

Now at age 32, you wouldn't know from the smile that lights up her face and her outlook on life that she's the same person. And Medina owes it all to caring members of her church and the Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida, which celebrates its 20th anniversary with the Hearts of Gold fundraiser on March 1.

She lived with her father after her mother's funeral, but it did not work out as planned, so she asked some friends to help her move into a shelter. Instead, the six of them were taken in by a couple from Cornerstone Baptist Church. That's when she learned about the Housing Now program offered by the Coalition.

According to **Muffet Robinson**, director of communications and community relations for the Coalition, Housing Now, funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Rapid Re-Housing for Families Demonstration Program, targets newly homeless families with dependent children. Clients must have at least one moderate barrier to housing, such as a temporary financial strain, poor credit history, insufficient childcare, or inadequate education skills.

In Medina's case, Robinson says the program paid for the security deposit, first month's rent, four months of utilities, and 70 percent of the rent for eight additional months on her home in **East Orlando**. The program also offers case management, credit and budgeting counseling.

"It allows them to save money and get back on their feet," Robinson explains.

All of Medina's furniture and appliances were donated by either church members or from the Mustard Seed, a furniture bank for



COURTESY OF COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

The Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida helped Cora Medina into a home of her own.

struggling families. Her kids, ranging from ages 3-14, now enjoy a place of their own beyond a hotel room or living under someone else's roof.

"It is a blessing," says Medina. "I was also finally able to get a vehicle. I have never had one."

With her own place to live and a car to get around, Medina now has four jobs, which together have her working 40 hours a week. She has also started her own house cleaning company called Maid-A-New.

"She is a power of example," says Robinson. "She has come such a long way. She makes it all worth it."

Unfortunately, as successful as the HUD program has been, Robinson says it will end in February unless additional funding can be found. That's why Robinson is diligently getting the word out about the 20th anniversary of the Coalition's Gold of Hearts fundraiser, featuring a 38 Special concert on Friday, March 1, 2013 at Hard Rock Live. **L**

For more information about the Hearts of Gold fundraiser for the Coalition for the Homeless of Central Florida, visit our website at CentralFloridaLifestyle.com.