

My name is Tonya Fennelly. I am 36 years old. I have been homeless on and off for many years. I've lived with friends, family, and anyone that would take me in. I lost my seven kids a couple of times due to unstable housing. The rent was too high and I could never keep up. The last apartment I lost was due to substance abuse. I have been put through the eviction process twice. It was scary. After I lost my last apartment, I ended up in a rehab center with my son. Graduating the Families In Recovery Program was one of my greatest moments. I keep the certificate framed in my home to remind me of my accomplishment.

DCF referred me to SHF Program; at the time I did not know a lot about the program but knew I really needed help with all the ongoing issues. When I found out I was accepted to SHF I felt like I was given a second chance. For people like me, that just doesn't happen, second chances are hard to come by. I have lost six children; they are living in foster care due to my past bad decisions and lack of housing. I felt that someone pumped air back in my lungs. I would never in my life have been able to have the opportunities I have now if it weren't for the SHF program. I felt I had lost everything, no one could ever understand what it is like for a mother to lose her children. I don't want to lose my son, he is with me now and I never will do anything to lose him. I thank SHF for giving me the second change and allowing me to be a mother again. They not only helped me financially but emotionally, educationally and supportively. I went from the projects of Waterbury to a beautiful apartment in Stamford where my son could attend a good school and I can live in a safe, healthy neighborhood. I feel that if people are given the chance to do it right, they will. If I didn't get out of the projects I would still be involved with making bad choices and surrounded by negative influences. I

...have a chance now to have a great life and provide for my son. I did this for my son and
...enjoy watching him get a good education and opportunities I did not have. My son has
...special needs and to be part of a wonderful, understanding school district makes it easier
...for him given all the barriers he has with special needs. The school professionals are
...fantastic with him and they understand his special needs. He has a chance at life now due
...to my involvement with SHF and the opportunities it opened for me.

... No one can ever really know what this program has done for my life, and my
...family's future. Words don't do it justice. When I think about programs like SHF having
...budget cuts, it makes me sad, and scared. Families everywhere need this help, because
...the help that SHF gives us is permanent. I know the help I received from this program
...will last a lifetime, and I couldn't ask for anything more for my family.