

## Maria

Maria's story shows how Tabor's programs can take a determined person from homeless to homeowner in just a few years. Fleeing abuse, Maria and her five young children were in transitional housing in March 2003. In Tabor's Shelter to Independent Living program, Maria was approved for Section 8 rental assistance and found stable housing.

In June 2004, Maria enrolled in Tabor's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program for section 8 clients. Maria had a very stressful temporary job and felt discouraged and depressed. Rya, her counselor, knew of a job opening at the Lancaster City Housing Authority. Maria's capability and determination was evident and she was hired as long as she obtained her GED within 90 days. Maria started her job and passed her GED tests the same day!

In Tabor's Consumer Credit Counseling program, Maria addressed all her debt. In Tabor's Family Savings Account program [now **Matched Savings Accounts**], she saved for a home. In February 2006, Maria applied for a mortgage through USDA's rural housing program and by June, closed on her four-bedroom home through the Section 8 Homeownership program and graduated from FSS.

Of her house, Maria says, "It is mine; I don't have to worry about changing anything or answering to a landlord. I have a yard and it is in a great neighborhood and my kids can run free with no worries." She continues to save in FSA for home improvement, and meets with Rya for her one year of post-purchase counseling.

At work, Maria was promoted and is now in charge of resident selection. "It takes real will power to get the strength you need to overcome the problems that are holding you down. You can't expect all the problems to go away fast. As long as you believe in yourself, anything is possible."

What she likes best about her job is that she gets to help people in need. "When I see another person like me struggling, and she receives Section 8 and uses that support to take advantage of all the help that is offered through the program to improve her life; it makes me smile. I can see, through LCHA, that not all young mothers will just settle with getting assistance for the rest of their lives, because we do have goals and we will meet them, no matter what complications we may face."

Maria believes her experience has taught her children "to be strong and independent ... to realize that bad things can happen and you just have to make the best of every situation and find happiness in the little pleasures that life will grant you." She adds, "I just want them to enjoy being children and not see any more drama. They have seen so many things that I wish I could change. So I just want them to be happy and not have to worry anymore. I want them to get their education and excel in whatever career they choose."

Summing up her experience, Maria says, "I was at a point where I was ready to let it all go, but I refused to let anyone put me in a place that I knew I didn't belong. I am not willing to be unhappy anymore, if I am stressed I will smile or act silly and that always makes me feel better. Never forget who you were and where you want to be in life and then do it. Don't make excuses. Only you and you alone can make the decision to better your life."

Congratulations Maria, for striving against great odds and succeeding for yourself and your family!