

Families Moving Forward provides those in need with temporary housing and continued support

“Even though it was a shelter, they made it feel like it was my home.”

Cynthia Edwards

By McKenna Lea
Staff, Durham VOICE

What would you do if you and your children were suddenly homeless? How would you keep your family safe and sheltered?

Families Moving Forward is an organization that can help in such times of need, providing temporary homes to families with children who are in this position.

The organization provides emergency housing to families for up to 90 days. They extend their support by providing financial assistance, opportunities for self-help and counseling for up to 12 months after finding permanent residence.

Shana Carignan, the development director at Families Moving Forward, has helped many Durham locals overcome the crisis of homelessness.

“There are so many great things happening in Durham, but the cost of living has gone up and people who are living in poverty are experiencing homelessness at a higher rate,” Carignan said. “They just can’t keep up and that’s where we come in, to serve families with children.”

Cynthia Edwards experienced the generosity of Families Moving Forward firsthand, when circumstances suddenly required Edwards to take custody of her two grandchildren.

“I got temporary custody of my grandchildren and my landlord said that we’d have to go because where I was living didn’t allow kids,” Edwards said. “We received a call the next day from Families Moving Forward saying that they could put me and



Cynthia Edwards is happy to be in her new home after leaving Families Moving Forward. She lives with her two grandchildren. (Staff Photo by McKenna Lea)

my grandchildren up in this place.”

Families Moving Forward provided Edwards and her grandchildren with a community-based environment where they could find a way to get back on their feet.

“Even though it was a shelter, they made it feel like it was my home,” Edwards said. “Everyone was so wonderful there. It was just me being blessed all over again because of the way they looked after me and my grandbabies.”

Edwards has also been able to take advantage of the services Families Moving Forward provides to families after they’ve left the temporary accommodation.

“Now that I’ve moved out of the home, I have myself a beautiful place,” Edwards said. “It’s not a mansion, but it’s my mansion. They’re still working with me because I allow them to be in my life, but I know they won’t see me coming back.”

Edwards said there are still many others in need and the community should organize more fundraising for housing assistance.

“I know what I come from and if I became a millionaire tomorrow, I would make sure I had a West Wing for any shelter people,” Edwards said. “I am at peace now. I feel

good because my grandkids, my kids and my family is proud of me and the addictions I’ve overcome.”

The organization relies heavily on the generosity of the Durham community. Tom Meyer is a board member of Families Moving Forward and is constantly striving to continue the organization’s work.

“We are a community in Durham that is blessed with a uniquely caring environment,” Meyer said. “Thousands of volunteers have given time, attention and resources to help this 120-person community that needs a lot of help in getting and staying off the streets.”

The organization tries to create new connections within Durham to help continue its services and provide people with new opportunities.

A new fundraising series, Chefs for Change, will be held in Durham over the next year. The dinner series will feature distinguished chefs with a majority of the profits going directly to Families Moving Forward, said Meyer.

The work Families Moving Forward does in the Durham community allows families of all colors, shapes and sizes to truly move forward.