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# Texas Mom Single, But Not Alone

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AUSTIN, TEXAS

**L**ike many of the people seeking help from the Children's HOME Initiative, a program offered by developer Foundation Communities, Felissa Spivey had nowhere else to turn.

A single mom of five, 43-year-old Spivey was homeless before she moved into Foundation's Trails at Vintage Creek.

"I was staying first with some friends, but I did not think it was acceptable for my children to be around them, the way that they were living," says Spivey. "So we moved into a hotel that I couldn't really afford for almost three weeks.

"I found out about this program right before Christmas last year," she continues. "It was a great present: I have a three-bedroom, two-bath apartment that's very comfortable for me and my kids. Compared to where I was before, this is heaven. It's peaceful and a rent I can afford to pay."

Trails at Vintage Creek offers one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments and duplexes in a wooded residential neighborhood in northeast Austin. Its Children's HOME Initiative provides transitional housing for up to 18 months to very low-income families in tandem with intensive case management focusing on housing stability, money management, and family well-being. The goal is to help families raise their household income, reach certain educational goals, and connect with social services.

"I'm now enrolled in school to be a medical assistant," says Spivey. "The staff has been very helpful with job searching."

Children's HOME Initiative also offers a two-to-one match for every dollar that participants save, as long as it goes



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—Felissa Spivey, resident, Trails at Vintage Creek

**Foundation Communities' Children's HOME Initiative has provided Felissa Spivey and her family with transitional housing and supportive services.**

toward the purchase of a house, to open a small business, or for an educational goal. Although she has yet to contribute any savings, Spivey looks forward to taking advantage of the three-year program soon.

"My goal for the future is to have my own day care center," she says.

Children's HOME Initiative also has provided valuable support for her children, who participate in programs at the on-site learning center. The center features a computer lab, multiple activity rooms, and free after-school and summer programs for children, as well as classes in English, money management, home-ownership, and GED for adults. This

support is more critical than ever, given the current national economic crisis. Spivey recently lost her primary source of income when the woman who had hired her to provide child care lost her job. This setback followed on the heels of Spivey losing her child support when her ex-husband lost his job.

Spivey says she particularly appreciates how Bernardo Fernandez, her case manager, serves as her sounding board and partner in brainstorming ideas.

"My case manager is just great," she says. "I bumped into him this morning and told him I didn't know what I was going to do. He listens to me and encourages me all the time." ■