



CenturyCollege

News Release

July 17, 2009

[Nancy Livingston](#)

Public Relations

651-779-3222

Fax 651-779-3470

[Century College](#)

3300 Century Avenue North

White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Making a Difference: Century Alum Tasha Moody

By Tasha Moody

My name is Tasha Moody and I am a resident of Maplewood. I consider myself one of the lucky ones.

Like many of you, I've never lived on the streets or had to stay in a shelter. I'm lucky because I had some family that was willing to help me out when I needed it the most.

As the housing specialist for East Metro Women's Council, I talk with homeless families every day. I meet with them and I hear their personal stories. I hear some stories that break your heart and I think to myself, I'm lucky because I didn't have it that bad. You see, even though I've never lived on the street or had to stay in a homeless shelter, I, too, have been homeless. I've had to move from place to place, couch-hopping, staying with friends and family until there wasn't any more room or time ran out. I'm not alone - 50 percent of families that live at East Metro Place were couch-hopping. The lack of permanent housing causes a lack of any stability for these women and their children. You see, there are all kinds of stories about homelessness out there and many ways to become homeless. I'd like to tell you mine.

My story begins when I became pregnant at 16; I figured out how to finish high school during my pregnancy and got married at 18 after I graduated. I had two more children after that. I thought I was

secure, but at 22 years old, I was separated with three children to support. Their father refused to pay child support or be involved in the care of our children.

I searched and found an apartment for me and my children, but the rent was so high. Today, the average rent in Minnesota for a one-bedroom apartment is over \$750 a month and a three-bedroom apartment is over \$1,200 a month. That's just the rent. I would need an income of over \$32,000 to pay for rent and all my necessities. I couldn't keep this up with a low-wage job, so I stayed with a friend, lived with my Dad for a while and on and on it went. The instability for me and my children was not healthy.

At this time, I was also going to Century College because I knew I needed to further my education to make a better income. Better income so I could afford a stable home for me and my children. I was accepted into the section 8 program which would help pay for some of my rent but not all of it. Being on the section 8 list, East Metro Women's Council called me to say they had an opening and they asked me if I interested.....

Yes, I was very interested. I met with and was accepted to live at East Metro where I stayed for 2 ½ years while I attended Century College full time. It was wonderful because I didn't have to worry about moving around all the time or wondering where I was going to stay next. I could concentrate on my school work and my children.

I graduated from Century College with a degree in human services and I am attending Metro State for my BA in Human Services.

After I left East Metro, my family advocate, who gave me great support, told me the building was being expanded and that a new position was opening up. I applied, interviewed and was hired as a Program Aide and shortly after was promoted to my current role as Housing Specialist. I have been employed with East Metro since 2005. As I mentioned, I talk with all the families who are looking for a place to call home. Life has come full circle for me.

I wouldn't have been able to stay in school without the help of East Metro. I would have had to quit and get a low-wage job and I still wouldn't have been able to afford a decent apartment. The downward spiral would have continued for me and my children. With stable housing came opportunity for me and my children - the opportunity to create stability for my kids and the independence I needed to create self sufficiency. At East Metro I was able to be a good role model for my kids so that they are not at risk for being homeless.

The programs at East Metro also helped my children. One of my sons learned to play chess from his after-school tutor. He loves it and plays often with his grandpa now.

Life continues to get better for me. I recently married a wonderful man and between us we have eight children. My next goal is to use my education and life experience to open a home for pregnant teens, including the fathers. You see, I'm one of the lucky ones and I'd like to pass it on. I believe that a person's character should not be defined by their barriers.

To learn how you can volunteer at East Metro Place, please call 651-773-8401, ext. 116. The next public tour is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 5 from 8 to 9 a.m. Another tour is set for Monday, Sept. 14 from 5 to 6 p.m. East Metro Place is located at 3521 Century Ave. N., White Bear Lake, just north of Century College.



Photo: Tasha Moody