

Habitat Homeowner-In- Progress: Darnett Lewis & Family

It is not unusual for a family to apply more than once before they are accepted into the Habitat homeownership program. But future homeowner Darnett Lewis took that persistence to a whole different level in 2019 when she applied for the fifth time.

Fortunately for her and her son, Kadarius (Pete), the fifth time was the charm.

Lewis, 55, explained that she began applying to Habitat in 2010 after hearing about it from one of her son's caregivers. Her first applications included her mother, but after her mother passed away, she continued to apply in hopes of building a more stable life for her and her son.

During those intervening years, she explained, they moved about five times – sometimes leaving neighborhoods that weren't safe for Pete, who is autistic and can't be left alone, sometimes leaving when the combination of increasing rents and high utility bills became too much, and sometimes leaving behind mold and unhealthy situations in their houses.

Adding to their challenges, Lewis explained, is that in addition to his autism, Pete, 31, has other health complications, some of which doctors told them were likely worsened by the mold. And, she too, she said, suffers from a myriad of health issues including asthma, bad knees and a bad back that she attributes at least in part to spending 27 years before she retired getting up and down from the floor of the infant room at the daycare on Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.



Darnett Lewis and her son, Pete, sit in their current home, looking forward to when they will be able to move into their new home on N. Georgia Ave.

But she said, despite – and even because of those challenges – her priority is still focused on taking care of her son and providing him a secure and stable future.

“He doesn’t like moving place to place. I want him to be in a stable place,” Lewis said. “I want him to be in a healthy home and a good neighborhood where nobody’s picking on him.”

And so when she got the call that she had finally been accepted into the Habitat program, she said she was overcome with emotion.

“When she [Family Services Director Linda Biser] called me, I was so happy,” Lewis said. “I just said, ‘Thank you, Jesus! Thank you!’”

Now, as Lewis works on her 300 sweat equity hours, she says both she and her son are looking forward to this new chapter as they prepare to move into a new home on N. Georgia Ave.

“He understands. We’ve driven over there and I’ve showed him and he’s excited,” she said.