

RENEWAL

A POAH MIDWEST NEWSLETTER



Dawn Clark and Family – Why It Matters that Every Community Must be One of Opportunity

When Dawn Clark and her three children moved into a POAH property in the Woodlawn section of Chicago more than ten years ago, they were excited to find stable housing and be part of a vibrant neighborhood that was undergoing a revitalization with long-term residents benefitting from the change.

By 2014, Dawn and her children had new life goals, wanting to gain the education, skills and experiences that would help them build the future they desired. And so, they turned to the Cottage Grove offices of the Woodlawn Resource Center (WRC) operated by POAH Communities.

Dawn signed up for support services and resources that helped her gain financial stability and find a job. Working with a WRC Financial Opportunity Team counselor, she was able to raise her credit score by more than 100 points and remove more than \$3,000 in debt. At the same time, she was working on improving her computer skills by participating in digital literacy classes and received employment counseling that would help her apply for a job.

While Dawn was building her skills, her three children were busy building their own future - participating in summer camp, tutoring, and doing volunteer work as part of their school's community service requirements. All along the way, the Woodlawn Resource Center was supporting and encouraging each of them in their individual paths to success.

Dawn completed an accelerated employment program through the Woodlawn Job Club, a partnership of WRC's with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership. Becoming skilled in development, customer service and effective communications, Dawn first procured a job at South Shore Hospital and then landed her 'dream job' in the City's Department of Streets and Sanitation.

With a steady job and the help of her WRC financial coach Ms. Clark enrolled in a Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program, that allows participating households to save the amount of rent increases that result from increased income due to employment into a special escrow account for home buying. By 2020 Ms. Clark and her family moved into their own home through the POAH/NHS Renew Woodlawn Program.

Dawn's daughter Yasmine, who works for United Airlines and lives in her own apartment, talks about the meaning of her mother's journey for her and her family.

"I am very proud of her for moving into the next step in her life and being the first person in my immediate family to be a homeowner. Also, this transition in my mom's life gives me something to look forward to in my future of owning a home myself. This transition is a big step in my mom's, my brothers and my life considering where we have come from. I'm happy to go to my mom's home knowing it is ours. It's spacious and my mom's been talking about having her own garden... and it's finally happened. Our dog even has a big back yard to himself... Everything about this makes me happy... 2020 gave us something good to look forward to."

