

Bienvenido a Casa - Welcome Home

Story by Ashley Henry - Volunteer & Donations Coordinator for I-RISE South Jersey

I wanted to take a brief moment to share a story- an encounter I had with a Venezuelan Mom and her 2-year-old son.

Typically, when a house is set up for a new arrival, I do not get to see the family enter the home for the first time; however, because I had to make extra keys at Home Depot for the house that day, I had the opportunity to meet a single mom and her son at the door.

Upon meeting the family, I pulled out my Google Translate app and gave her a tour of the space. The Mom entered the bedroom holding her son closely on her hip. When she saw her son's NASCAR themed bed with a racecar plushie and car toys waiting for him to play with- she expressed happiness over seeing her living arrangements and showed her son the gifts laid out for him. (*We provided the family with a crib as well).

After pointing out where her food and kitchen items were located, I showed her one final place in her room- the closet. On the top rack (away from little hands) we displayed all her toiletries, towels, washcloths, soaps and cleaning supplies. I will never forget the look on her face when I pointed up. Her shoulders visibly dropped and tears filled her eyes (as they did mine) as a weight seemed to lift out of the room. We both fought back the urge to cry. And, because it felt right, I pulled out my phone to end the tour with this message "Bienvenido a Casa." "Welcome Home."



To all my volunteers and donors, some of these families may not ever be able to shake your hand and say thank you to your face for the donations you give, but on their behalf, I say "thank you." Your continued generosity with your finances and with your time means so much to us and helps us continue to warmly welcome families like this Venezuelan mom and her little boy to a new life in America.

Thank you!