

From a tiny apartment to a beautiful new home *by Carol Manning*

At the dedication of her new house, Katina Leake, now owner of Habitat Newark's 71st house described her new home as a House of Prayer—with her prayers for everyone at Habitat Newark who helped make possible her dream of homeownership: the staff, the many volunteers, and the sponsor of the home, John W. Scott and his family. She also related how, "Working alongside such hard-working people has made me stronger."



Katina is a single mom and school bus aide studying to obtain her CDL license to become a fully certified school bus driver. She and her three children, Keyona (now age 18), Azia (age 12) and Christopher (10) were living in a small, two bedroom apartment when she learned about Habitat Newark from a good friend and co-worker already living in a Habitat home. Katina and Keyona worked side by side building each Saturday until Keyona entered college this fall. Together, Katina's family amassed more than 450 hours of sweat equity to count toward the down payment on their home.

When Katina describes her children and their accomplishments it is clear that her family is one not only of togetherness and mutual support, but also one where accomplishment is the norm. After graduating from Arts High School Keyona is now a freshman at Kean University majoring in education. She continues to have a strong interest in music, having played the flute since the sixth grade. Her younger sister, Azia, recently entered Arts High, albeit in 6th grade. Azia plays the recorder—presenting the family a special Christmas concert this year to celebrate their new home—and is concentrating on drama at the school. She also is a cheerleader for her brother's Pop Warner football team, the East Ward Stallions, from Newark's East Ward. Christopher, the athlete of the family, played on a championship football team last year. Academically the three also shine, with Azia and Christopher recognized as 2010 Pop Warner In-house scholars and Keyona graduating grade school as valedictorian.

With her Christian faith in God, Katina now feels like a 'wonder woman' who has personally accomplished so much since becoming a Partner Homeowner with Habitat Newark. In addition to having a home with three bedrooms for her and the family, she is particularly excited about her spacious kitchen and backyard, all things she has never had before. "I am so grateful to the whole Habitat family, not only for helping me build my new home, but also for the new friendships I have made during the process: the staff, volunteers, and sponsors, as well as the other partner families I have met as I helped them build their Habitat homes."