

Meka's Story

Interview and Article by Kathryn Scarvelli

“One hand at a time, we can give of ourselves by donating our time and property to help rise beyond poverty.”

Meka White is a mother of three, Medical Assistant at Welcome Nursing Home in Oberlin, and part time college student. Her day normally begins around 5:30 AM, with getting ready for work. When her shift at work is complete, she then attends college classes at LCCC. When she goes home, Meka does laundry, cooks, cleans and exercises. In her spare time, she volunteers at the Oberlin Community Center, donates clothing, cooks for the community picnic, and sings in a nursing home choir. Over the years, Meka and her family have hosted a yearly cook out for the community. Some of Meka's accomplishments include singing at the House of Blues as a jazz singer, and also working hard on the treadmill and at Splash Zone to lose weight. In fact, Meka was featured in the Chronicle Telegram for her outstanding weight loss accomplishment.

Prior to building a Habitat for Humanity house, Meka and her children were living in a rundown apartment. At the family's old residence, they dealt with a stubborn landlord, who was slow to repair problems. The paint on the walls was chipping, the building was barely brought up to code, it had minimal yard space, and too many stairs. When Meka and her children began working towards building their Habitat for Humanity house, in 1995, they had some ideas in mind. Meka, who was 23 at the time, was relieved to be building a home without steps. Together, the family picked carpet, tile, and much more. Meka loves to decorate her home. In the process of designing, she chose to use an oriental theme in the living room. The bedrooms are painted a “tiger” color. While the house was in the process of being built, they each put their names on the kitchen beams. They also have a time capsule buried in the back yard. In meeting with her architect, Meka made some minor improvements, such as adding a window and increasing a bedroom's size. Meka was thrilled to have a first hand experience of building her Habitat for Humanity house. Also, at this house, Meka is now able to garden and landscape. More enjoyments of home owning for Meka and her family include being able to have a basketball court and a dog. There is less noise, and as a community there is less debris and clutter. She was proud to say that the people in her Oberlin community are much more caring, family -like, and close knit. Overall, the home has 4 bedrooms, 2 full baths, a hideaway laundry area, and ceiling fans in each room. Currently, Meka and her 20 year old son , Jehaun, live in the home. Jehaun, is now enrolled at LCCC to become a computer specialist. Meka's two other children are also attending college. One of the things she believes in very strongly is the idea that if she can provide her family with a house, where they can be successful, feel proud, and increase their morale, then hopefully her children will also work towards home ownership. This theory proved to be true with Meka's daughter who now owns a home of her own. Meka expressed the enthusiasm she felt to be paying towards home ownership, not just paying to rent an apartment. When Meka speaks with those who are still working their way towards building their own home, she ensures them that they should never be ashamed of what they have. She believes that working hard can help everyone to rise above poverty.

Currently, Meka is working at Welcome Nursing Home. She has been there for the past 11 years as a Medical Assistant/STNA/Phlebotomist. Meka also mentioned that her workplace is “family oriented.” One of the things she loves most about her job is that it is only five minutes from home. In the time to come, many new and exciting things will be happening in Meka's life. She is currently working towards starting her own gospel singing group. When her college bills are paid, she hopes to invest in purchasing a new car. Next year she will be receiving her Associates degree. Meka and her family are extremely thankful for all that Habitat for Humanity has helped them to become. “Habitat for Humanity is a great program, and without it we wouldn't be able to afford a house. Sweat Equity taught us hard work and showed us that working in unity can help accomplish great tasks.”