

SUCCESS STORY

Writing her next chapter

In a new home, Akaila has a place to keep learning and growing

When Akaila was 12, she ran away from home. She doesn't like to talk about those days, but she says, "I knew the situation was not what I wanted to be in." She considers herself lucky that she was able to stay with a series of her friends' families. Sometimes, she rode the subway all night long.

At 13, Akaila went into foster care and had a series of foster families. She finally found a sense of stability with Ms. Holmes. "[She] was more like a mom than a foster mom," Akaila shares. "She is the one who helped me stay focused. She made sure I had my first bank account and my first job. She set a foundation." With Ms. Holmes, Akaila was treated as a full member of the family, receiving birthday gifts and being included in holiday celebrations. It wasn't like that at every foster family.

Her path ahead was very difficult. While still in foster care as a teen, she became pregnant with her first son. Foster care options were very limited for young mothers and their children.

Then COVID hit. "I shipped my whole life to Grenada," she says. In Grenada, Akaila lived with family members and her young son. But tourism, the heart of Grenada's economy, had evaporated during the pandemic.

She eventually returned to New York City, "I was living off of my savings in a hotel," says Akaila.

On May 21, 2022, her money had run out, and she went to a family shelter. "I don't wish the shelter on my worst enemy," she says.



Former foster children normally have access to many pathways to help them avoid homelessness after aging out of care, but Akaila's time living in Grenada made it difficult for her case to get reviewed appropriately.

Throughout her time in shelter, she consistently advocated for herself, trying everything she could to find a way out.

"I was always looking for other avenues. If not, I would probably still be in the shelter," she says. During this time, she gave birth to her second son.

Her children made her determined not to "settle." When it came to her next home, she wanted to ensure it was in a good area.

"So many people are in the shelter for so long," explains Akaila, "I didn't come out until 2025. I was working, and everyone asked me, 'How can you be working and still be in shelter?' I felt like, 'I am doing everything I have to do to get help, but nothing is happening.'"

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Her sons were going to a clinic in Manhattan, and the clinician would check in on Akaila when she brought them in. The clinician recommended applying for supportive housing, and Akaila was accepted. She moved into her new apartment with HousingPlus, near the neighborhood where she grew up, attending school at P.S. 156.

Since entering supportive housing at HousingPlus, Akaila has continuously worked to provide a better life for her kids. “I am proud of my resilience and my ability to see the beauty in life. Even if I won’t say things are perfect...a few years ago, I was in shelter. Now I have this safe environment for my children,” she says.

She has a cosmetology license and has continued working in that field, but her long-term goal is to attend

“A few years ago, I was in shelter. Now I have this safe environment for my children.”

John Jay College and obtain a four-year degree in Forensic Science. With her HousingPlus case manager’s help, Akaila applied to John Jay this summer, and she hopes to hear soon whether she is accepted.

“I want to be able to show my sons, ‘Mommy could do it. I had you guys, and I still went back,’” she explains. “I describe myself as like a book that still has chapters to go. You’re learning through life, and you’re learning with your kids.”

Welcome: Ron Abad joins HousingPlus Board

HousingPlus is excited to welcome Ron Abad as the newest member of our Board of Directors.

Ron Abad is the Chief Executive Officer of Community Housing Innovations, Inc. (CHI), a nonprofit housing provider with an operating budget of \$125M and approximately 700 employees, operating homeless shelters, affordable housing, supportive housing, permanent housing, homeownership, eviction/foreclosure prevention, financial literacy, and supportive services to thousands of families and individuals New York City and surrounding areas.

Ron previously served as a Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at two other nonprofit housing providers in New York City and as an Assistant Commissioner for Capacity Planning and Development for families with children shelters at the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

Ron Abad holds a Juris Doctor from Boston College Law School and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Howard University. He has also completed Executive Education and certificate programs focused on leaders at the Harvard Law School Program, the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and New York University.



Back to school, backpacks full

Marble Collegiate Church and Old First Reformed Church donate to brighten students' first day of school

This year, our generous community partners donated more backpacks than ever before to HousingPlus. The backpack drive generated 150 satchels for students. Each bag was filled with supplies that the young people need to succeed in school from Day 1.

We are extremely grateful for the continued commitment of Marble Collegiate Church, whose community donated 100 backpacks, and Old First Reformed Church, whose congregation provided an additional 50 bags.

On a drizzly day in August, families gathered at 365 Shepherd Avenue to pick up their backpacks, plus

bundles of extra supplies that were especially helpful for older students.

In just three hours, we gave away nearly 80 backpacks to our community members. Our dedicated staff took the remaining backpacks to be distributed at sites farther away from our Shepherd location, ensuring that joy was spread to all corners of HousingPlus' network of apartments.

Every year, it is incredibly rewarding to see children get excited to learn. This beautiful gift of backpacks helps ensure every child has what they need.



Residents of HousingPlus apartments receive backpacks stuffed with useful supplies, plus additional goodies

Gala Save the Date!

September 20, 2027

Celebrating a Quarter Century of HousingPlus! We are excited to celebrate our momentous anniversary with all of our supporters like you.

ACHIEVING GOALS

Working to spread hope

Remember Debra? Thanks to the generosity of supporters like you, she is telling her story and helping others

You may remember our tenant, Debra, from our newsletter in Spring of 2026. We are excited to share that Debra has started a new part-time job at Samaritan Daytop Village as a Certified Peer Recovery Advocate. Her goal, she says, was always to help others. She wanted to provide others with the perspective someone who had struggled with addiction and relapse. It was only possible for her to reach this point because she worked diligently to obtain appropriate training.

Debra shared that she was offered more than one position while interviewing, but she accepted the role at Samaritan so that she could return to the institution that got her on the road to recovery before entering supportive housing at HousingPlus.

In addition to this momentous news, Debra also helped tell others about HousingPlus programming at an event presented by the NYC Justice Peer Initiative. Debra shared her story of how her addiction caused major disruptions in her life, as well as how she finally found the strength to pursue recovery. The audience included service providers, social workers, advocates, justice-impacted people.



You're getting a sneak peek

Van Sinderen breaks ground; new project will represent a 20%+ growth in our overall housing stock

We broke ground on Van Sinderen this Fall! Our co-developer and dedicated partner, Spatial Equity, began to pour the foundations of the building recently.

So far, crews have completed about 10% of the construction on the building. Though things can always shift during the construction process, as of now the project is on target to be completed ahead of schedule, by December 2027.



Construction workers at 729 Van Sinderen

Van Sinderen will bring more than 100 permanent supportive apartments to the HousingPlus portfolio. With these new additions, our ability to serve women and families will grow tremendously, and we will continue our commitment to alleviating the affordable housing crisis in NYC.

How YOU can help

You put the Plus in HousingPlus

Make a bigger difference by becoming a sustaining monthly donor: A HousingPlus Hero!

By giving to HousingPlus, you help to provide safe, secure, supportive, and permanent housing for women, children, and families while they build stable lives and realize their goals.

Our housing-first model provides tenants with a stable place to live while overcoming everything from poverty, homelessness, addiction, trauma, and the effects of incarceration.

Can we count on you to add the “plus” that New York City women, children, and families need today? Donations like yours can help an apartment become a home for tenants like Akaila, who considers her top priority ensuring her children can have access to a safe neighborhood and nearby schools.

You can make a donation on our website <https://housingplusnyc.org/donate/> or use the QR code shown here!



Scan Code to Donate

SHOWING OFF SHEPHERD

Investing in home, gathering in partnership

On August 18, HousingPlus, Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF), and the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) hosted elected and appointed leaders from across the city and state. At this dynamic event, we showcased the difference a home can make for New Yorkers impacted by homelessness.

During the visit, Karen Ford, CEO of HousingPlus, and Aisha Benson, CEO of NFF, gave remarks; attendees took part in a facility tour, and we demonstrated firsthand how strategic public, private, and community partnerships deliver tangible results in East New York and Cypress Hills, Brooklyn. We also spoke about our upcoming building project at 729 Van Sinderen Avenue,

financed in partnership with NFF and the CSH, both Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).

Among our attendees were Miguel Bonilla, Deputy Director of Capacity Building at the Mayor's Office of Nonprofit Services, who presented HousingPlus with a special Certificate of Recognition signed by Mayor Mamdani.

In addition, representatives from the offices of Congressman Hakeem Jeffries and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, and many other local leaders joined this on-site visit to one of our largest permanent supportive housing projects.



Photo credit Darryl Madison

HOUSING PLUS NEWSLETTER

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Have an idea for a story? Wish to share your feedback on our newsletter? Email Michelle at michelle@housingplusnyc.org

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