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Stories of Hope: Madeline Mendez Velez realizes dream of homeownership

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My name is Madeline Mendez Velez, and I am involved with the Homes Brings Hope program.

I work six days a week to provide for my three kids. Itzel is 8, and she's in third grade at South Daytona Elementary. She's a bookworm and is very creative. She has a wonderful imagination and enjoys drawing when she's not reading. Kayleen, who attends Campbell Middle School, is 13 now and likes all things beauty-related, such as doing hair and nails. She also loves dance. My 15-year-old son, Gabriel, is studying online and is passionate about basketball.

Over the last couple of years, I have saved money, worked toward increasing my credit score, and completed homebuyer education classes. While I never really believed I could become a homeowner, I've always dreamed of buying a house. I've dreamed of welcoming family for extended visits, and my children owning pets.

More Stories of Hope

Chelsea Reed thankful for Food Brings Hope donations

Malana Jackson thanks Food Brings Hope for educational jumpstart, support

This year, that dream has come true. Normally for Christmas, I go to my grandma's house, but this year, since I have a home now, my family will come and celebrate at our house. For the first time in 16 years, my sister and I will be able to spend Christmas together. I am so thrilled to get to put up a tree and decorate our house this year, something we could not do before now.

I consider it a miracle that Homes Bring Hope has become part of my life. Its staff, partners and volunteers have done what I thought would be impossible. They helped me qualify to buy a home despite my limited income and lack of experience. They have helped me every step of the way and they are still helping me as I adjust from being a life-long renter to being a proud homeowner.

About this series: The FBH Community's mission is to foster community organizations that proactively work to eradicate the causes of generational poverty. Programs such as Food Brings Hope, VCan, Pierson Family Literacy, Homes Bring Hope and the FBH Prosperity Initiative help hardworking families struggling with hunger, housing insecurity, underemployment and low levels of literacy. Overhead is covered by the Hosseini Family Foundation, so 100% of donations go directly to

the programs and families. Throughout the holidays, The News-Journal is highlighting the organization by publishing the stories of some of its young participants. To donate to the organization, or to brighten the holidays by donating a gift to a child, email info@foodbringshope.org.