

Mothers and Infants Striving for Success group opens PSL facility

By Laurie K. Blandford

Originally published 05:45 p.m., April 3, 2009

Updated 05:45 p.m., April 3, 2009



PHOTO BY JUAN DALE BROWN

Tamika Freeman, of Port St. Lucie, was one of several single **mothers** who moved into the new **Mothers and Infants Striving for Success** complex off Port St. Lucie Boulevard Friday night. Freeman has been waiting for about three months to move in to the new \$1.3 million facility, called Sammy's Landing, after living her aunt.

PORT ST. LUCIE - Without the help of Mothers and Infants Striving for Success, Amy Sturgeon and her 2-year-old twin daughters would be sleeping in her car. The 31-year-old Martin Country resident has been using her car as a suitcase since their birth, which forced her to leave her job as an \$8-an-hour grill cook and bounce from one friend's home to another. It's hard to get back on your feet once you have been off your feet, Sturgeon said I am tired of just surviving. I want to have my life back.

€•

Sturgeon and her daughters are part of the 15 women and 30 children who were homeless before moving Friday into the nonprofit organization's \$1.3 million facility, Sammy's Landing. The building is an eight-unit transitional housing apartment complex at 862 S.W. Koler Ave. consisting of two-bedroom, two-bathroom units. She has the option to stay six months to two years.

As an independent homeowner for most of her life, Sturgeon alone cares for her daughters most of the time, and they stay with their dad only every once in a while. She barely survived on financial support from her grandmother.

The program will provide her kids with a safe place to sleep at night and help get them into child care, as well as help get her into a job, back in school and into volunteer work. Now I can start moving forward with my life and getting somewhat stable, Sturgeon said. I don't want (my kids) to be in my situation when they are my age. She was not the only one who needed help. More than 148 women from around the Treasure Coast applied for the housing last year, according to executive director Schonna Green.

The number of homeless women and children has increased since opening the first facility, Hope Park, in Martin County 10 years ago. A third facility, Butterfly Garden, will open this year in Martin County to provide housing for 40 women and 80 children. "It's our goal to help them become self-sufficient," Green said.

House rules include an 11 p.m. curfew, chores, weekly inspections, and participation in empowerment classes every week to help with issues such as money management.

I am not sure what the future holds Sturgeon said, but this program at least gives you a future. •

