

## Families in crisis rely on housing program: [www.heraldtimesonline.com](http://www.heraldtimesonline.com)

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Tyler Babbs vividly remembers the night his family became homeless. A tornado struck the 10-year-old's home on May 25, scattering his family's life to the wind.

"I always been scared of storms, and that was my biggest fright," Tyler said, trying to hold back tears. "I was scared, and I could hear my mom and sisters screaming."

He remembers the chaos and panic that ensued as the tornado lifted the mobile home off the ground. His mother, Marie Carter, said their home was then dropped five feet while her husband, two daughters, youngest son and two family friends were inside.

"Our walls were blown in and half of our roof was ripped off," she said. "It wasn't livable at that point."

According to Carter, the family went back to their home on Ind. 45 on May 31 and attempted to salvage anything that remained. They found it had been bulldozed by their landlord without notification.

Carter, a full-time Ivy Tech student, and her husband, Johnathan Kroen, found temporary shelter through the Red Cross for two nights following the tornado and then found temporary housing at friend and family homes. They are currently living in the basement of her parents' home in Smithville.

They are currently seeking aid through the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program to find a stable residence for Carter's four children: two daughters, 15 and 14, and sons, 10 and 13, before the school year begins.

"I don't want any problems with Child Protective Services," she said. "This is the most unstable my kids have ever been, and I hope this program can help us find stability again."

While Carter hopes for the program to continue, Michelle Meyers is able to testify to the program's success in her life.

Meyers' family is one of 96 to graduate from the program in Region 10. Meyers remembers a time when her living situation was not much different from Marie Carter's. It was around Christmas 2009 when she lost her job and was subsequently involved in a nasty divorce.

Within a matter of months, the life of Meyers' three children transformed from a stable two-parent household to a single mother who was unable to financially maintain their home.

Meyers and her family lived in Lawrence County, and her closest relatives lived more than 100 miles away in Madison County. Her children were still in school at the time, and she did not want to disrupt their lives any more by moving away.

"My kids needed to get back in school, so we actually ended up staying in a shelter for a night," she said.

Meyers notified her son's school about their living situation, and a teacher at her son's Head Start program referred her to the housing program.

She connected with the Region 10 coordinator, where life-changing steps were taken to find stability for her family.

"At one point in our lives, we were very financially stable," she said. "To go from that to being so desperate was awful."

Meyers found another job and applied for the program. She received an interview within a week and for once, in a long time, felt hope that her situation would get better.

"That was the biggest relief to me that something was going to happen very soon," she said.

She went out on her own and found an affordable home for rent. The program paid her moving expenses and aided her in her first month's rent. She now lives in Lawrence County with her two daughters, 13 and 16, and son, 6, and also works two jobs, one of which is her own virtual tour business.

Meyers said she felt the program saved her life.

"We don't have anything fancy, but we've definitely come a long way," she said.

Kristy Sosbe, left, and Tyler Babbs stand in the street outside the remains of the trailer where they lived before a tornado in May. The children and their family are homeless.  
Jeremy Hogan | Herald-Times



Adam Starr, Kristy Sosbe, Marie Carter, Tyler Babbs, Johnathan Kroen and Heather Babbs stand outside the trailer where they lived before a tornado struck in May.  
Jeremy Hogan | Herald-Times



**Michelle Meyers gives her son, Eric, a kiss in their home in Bedford. Meyers and her family were helped by the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program after a job loss and divorce left them unable to retain their home. David Snodgrass | Herald-Times**

