

## MEET THE PEARSON FAMILY

Wanda Pearson's will tell you her story started when she was 17, when she lost her mother. While grieving over the loss, Wanda had to move out of the Portsmouth apartment she'd shared with her mother, because her father wasn't eligible for the Section 8 voucher her mother had used to help pay the rent. Wanda was forced to move in with her aunt, and soon became pregnant with her oldest son. Wanda chose to keep her son, Camari, now 16 years old, a decision that caused her aunt to put her out on the streets, but her sister allowed her to stay with her. However, once the baby was born, Wanda asked her sister help with him so she could finish high school, but her sister told her no, telling her to drop out, which was something Wanda was not willing to do. Wanda was able to find a friend willing to help her.

Shortly after this, Wanda started going through some even harder times, she endured abuse from her son's father, and later another man, whose actions caused them to lose the apartment they shared. During this time, Camari stay with a friend of Wanda's, so that he could have a place to lay his head, but she cried every night without her son. As she slept in her car at night, all she could think about was getting her life together. Wanda decided to apply for assistance from Norfolk Housing Authority. Once she was approved for housing assistance, she moved to Norfolk, and started going to school for Medical Assisting.



However, things got worse when she learned that, after having been released from jail, Camari's father was murdered. Camari was only 6 years old at the time and was devastated by the loss of his father. He had a difficult time coping, was suspended from school multiple times, started running away, stealing, and threatening other children.

During this time Wanda also gave birth to her second son, Cayden, now 9 years old. She experienced postpartum depression, and felt like her life was going backwards. When her second son's father became abusive, she left him deciding she needed to focus on her children, praying every day that her life would turn around.

After graduating as a medical assistant Wanda was hired with Sentara, and was able to move back to Portsmouth and receive a Section 8 housing voucher to assist her with the rent of her new home. Even though things seemed to be turning around, Wanda had been hit hard by her life. Her credit was so bad, she had to file for bankruptcy, but she was able to purchase a car with money she had saved up so that she was able to get to work.

Wanda's life started to turn around. She went back to school to become a Licensed Practical Nurse and has since graduated from ECPI University, and continues to work for Sentara. It had officially been 5 years since Wanda filed bankruptcy, and she knew she was ready for a place to call her own. A co-worker told her to try Habitat for Humanity, and after doing some research, she managed to tell herself she wouldn't qualify, that she wouldn't even be called, or that she didn't even have a chance of being selected. But, she took a chance, applied, and has been selected to purchase a home in Suffolk.

Wanda looks forward to living in a home that is hers, where her sons will thrive, and she won't have to work three jobs just to be able to afford. It will be a place to call her own and she can't wait to help build it alongside Habitat SHR. As Wanda said, "This is my story, it started when I was 17, but truly it started before I was born, it was all planned."

