

# The Cowen Family

**“I am trying to build a strong foundation for my kids.”**

When the Cowen family sits at their kitchen table for a meal, they are not dining alone. The termite infestation in their delapidated townhouse is so pervasive, the termites are even eating their furniture.

The poorly maintained property receives little attention from the landlord and complaints are more often ignored. Candice Cowen has been at her wit's end with frustration and worry. But the three-bedroom rental is all she can afford, so she and her four children have learned to live with many problems.

The entire structure of the home poses not just comfort issues, but also health concerns. Faulty exterior doors with wide cracks allow other pests to invade the home. The doors also challenge the old air conditioning system as both cool air and heat escapes and enters through the cracks. The roof leaks, so consequently the floors and walls are showing signs of decay and water damage. The windows are malfunctioning. Worst of all, Candice has received notices that the walls may contain asbestos.

Outside an infestation of another kind exists. The neighborhood is crime-ridden. Someone was murdered near the townhome. Candice's car has been broken into twice in the past year. Understandably, she does not let her kids play outside.

Ja'Nya, 13, John, 7, Jaliyah, 4, and Jordan, 1, are in an environment that causes their mother much anxiety. She



worries about their health in a home that is pest-ridden and could have mold and asbestos issues. Her oldest is a cancer survivor. Her son has allergies. She worries about her kids' safety outside.

“I am trying to plan for our future and build a strong foundation for my kids by giving them a good example,” said Candice. She works hard to keep a roof over their heads and provide for their needs. Being self-sufficient is very

important to her. And so is stability. But the modest income she earns as a credit card banking associate has limited her options and kept her living paycheck to paycheck. So she has decided to go back to school with the hope of someday obtaining a better paying position.

Having the chance to buy a Habitat for Humanity home has been a godsend for Candice. That strong foundation she wants for her family will no longer be a metaphor.