

Tampa Veterans Build 2023

Serving Those Who Served

MARIO MELO

United States Air Force

Mario Melo is a dedicated and disabled veteran on a mission to secure affordable housing in Tampa, Florida. Currently residing in a one-bedroom, one-bathroom rental, Mario recognized the importance of transitioning from renting to homeownership for long-term stability.

Mario served four years with the United States Air Force as an Aircraft Armament Systems specialist (2W1X1) where his primary duties included: inspecting and servicing aircraft armament systems, loading and unloading weapons, conducting maintenance and repairs, testing, ammunition management, safety, documentation, security, and training for the aircraft. These duties are crucial to maintaining the readiness and effectiveness of aircraft armament systems in the Air Force.

Hailing from a humble background, Mario's roots trace back to a family that immigrated from the Dominican Republic. Raised by a single, hardworking mother, Mario and his family endured a series of moves from one apartment to another until his mother achieved the monumental milestone of homeownership.

After his honorable discharge, Mario was faced with new challenges in an increasingly expensive housing market while contending with diminishing income. This predicament left Mario apprehensive about his ability to establish a family or enter into marriage within his present circumstances. As a disabled veteran who lives on a fixed income, Mario is determined and persevering as he navigates these hurdles.



In his own pursuit of a stable and affordable living situation, Mario exhaustively scoured online platforms and veteran housing resources, only to be met with frustration. Even exploring options with a VA loan proved futile in his quest for secure and budget-friendly housing.

It was through this journey that Mario discovered Habitat for Humanity of Hillsborough County. Recognizing the profound impact this organization has on the community, Mario was filled with gratitude for the support they offer. For Mario, a home represents more than just shelter—it signifies a sanctuary where worries about landlords and escalating rents can be put to rest.

Looking ahead, Mario envisions his forever home—a haven for his future family. The prospect of providing a stable foundation for his loved ones is what drives him in his pursuit of homeownership. To Mario, a home isn't just bricks and mortar; it's a promise of security, stability, and the opportunity to build a life full of cherished moments.