

# MOUNT VERNON VOICE

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## COMMUNITY LIFE

### *From Homeless to Helping Others New Hope Names McGuire as Employee of the Year*



Courtesy photo  
New Hope Housing executive director Pam Michell, left, presented LaKesha McGuire with the Employee of the Year award.

LaKesha McGuire first came to New Hope Housing seeking shelter for herself and her two daughters in 2009. She spent about four months at the Mondloch House Family Shelter on Lockheed Boulevard where she says she became less frustrated about her situation because “New Hope Housing had solutions.”

Prior to living at the shelter, she had spent at least two years couch-surfing at friends’ and family apartments before she decided she had to admit she was homeless and take control of her situation.

She was working the entire time; however, her salary was high enough to not qualify for many benefits, but too low — combined with poor credit — to be able to rent many apartments in the area.

She resisted seeking assistance because she was embarrassed to have to admit to being homeless and felt it would be a stigma that she couldn’t overcome. More-

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## *New Hope Housing Names Employee of the Year*

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over, she was afraid to enter a shelter because she expected it to be a dark place where she’d only get a cot.

Instead, she says, she was surprised by how homey it was. There were always volunteers and community folks dropping off food, working with kids, and running special programs.

While there, she enrolled in the Out Of Poverty program, a 12-week course, which allowed “me

to examine my situation and how I could become a manifestation of my best self.”

With the help of New Hope Housing staff, she realized her dream of having a place of her own in 2010 and got married later that year.

In 2012, she began working at New Hope Housing and in June 2015, in front of her colleagues and coworkers, was announced as the New Hope Housing Employee of the Year by executive director Pam Michell.

McGuire is currently the office manager at their administrative office on Richmond Highway and is responsible for onboarding of new employees, planning special events, and chairing the Employee Engagement Committee.

What many people do not know is that McGuire is one of several New Hope Housing employees who were formerly homeless, says Michell.

“LaKesha is full of energy and positivity,” she said. “She puts

her whole self into every project she manages and is the smiling face you see when you enter our offices.

“She is a living example of how a person who experiences homelessness can get assistance and succeed and be a contributor the the community to the betterment of others,” Michell added.

New Hope Housing employees nominate their coworkers for this award and the executive committee selects from among the nominees.