

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS.com

Leaving abusive relationship puts woman, children in financial straits

By Christine Rogel crogel@lcsun-news.com

Posted: 01/07/2011 11:47:36 PM MST

LAS CRUCES - Escaping more than a decade of domestic violence with her five children under the age of 7 took bravery and courage for Christina Espriu, 27, who now faces homelessness in exchange for safety.

"It was a lot. It was very hard," said Espriu who was moved to tears when recalling last January. "It was extremely hard. I had to cramp up five boys and myself and we have to get blankets from the Gospel Mission Rescue just to keep warm. Just watching my kids suffer, it broke my heart."

Espriu left her husband while he was at work, moving from Tucson to Las Cruces with the help of her mother. Initially she and her five boys lived at La Casa, a domestic violence shelter, then they moved to a motel and eventually a 13-foot trailer at St. John's Mobile Home Park. During her stay there she was pregnant with her sixth child, Daymian.

La Casa can help

In the trailer, the family was without water, electricity or plumbing, and for heat at night they propped open the door of the propane-powered oven, said Diane Nilan, a filmmaker from Illinois who met Espriu last January.

"I live in a motor home that is 27 feet and I'm aware of space issues, and just in my wildest dreams, I can't imagine a mom and five children living in a

13-foot trailer," Nilan said.

Approximately 63 percent of homeless women have experienced domestic violence, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless.

Amy Johnson Bassford, resource development director for La Casa, said

that many women at the shelter choose daily between homelessness or remaining at home with their abuser.

La Casa is the only domestic abuse shelter in Do-a Ana County. Last fiscal year, it provided shelter for 512 people and support services to 546. On average, women stay at La Casa for 38 days. The shelter has 70 beds.

Johnson Bassford said the waiting list for public housing is one to two years and La Casa tries to provide intermediary housing and support in the meantime.

End of the line?

Espriu was able to move into a larger trailer in July after Nilan helped her apply for funding through the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program, a stimulus grant that provided \$1.5 billion nationwide for homelessness prevention.

But funding from HPRP has been discontinued in Do-a Ana County, according to Leann Kemp, communications manager at the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority, which disseminates HPRP money to agencies through a competitive bid process.

Espriu said she was expecting the program to last for over a year, giving her time to pursue her GED and find a job. She now has only one month to find

Advertisement



DIRECTV has more of what you want to watch!

Switch today! 1-888-778-0985



Offer ends 2/9/11. Credit card required (except in MA & PA). New approved customers only (lease required). \$19.95 Handling & Delivery fee may apply. Applicable use tax adjustment may apply on the retail value of the installation. Call for details.

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS.com

a new place to live and a way to afford it.

"With no job experience, no high school diploma, or GED, I'm pretty much done for. We're back on the streets," she said.

Costly omission

Espru cannot apply for housing assistance here until she pays over \$5,200 to the Las Cruces Housing Authority, which she owes because she failed to notify officials that her brother lived with her in subsidized housing in Tucson. The law requires that all people living in subsidized housing declare their income.

"For her to make payment arrangements for this \$5,200 is like me flying to the moon without a rocket ship. It's just not going to happen," Nilan said.

Nilan's nonprofit agency, Hear Us Inc., is collecting donations for Espru and her family to help her pay off the \$5,200. If you'd like to donate, visit hearus.us and click donate now. For more information call Nilan at (630) 225-5012.

Christine Rogel can be reached at (575) 541-5424.

Need help?

•If you have been a victim of domestic violence and need support or shelter, contact La Casa Inc., located on 800 South Walnut St., at (575) 526-2819. Or call La Casa's crisis hot line at (800) 376-2272.

Advertisement



SAVE up to **64%**
Plus, get
3 FREE Gifts



Special Code: 45069ZWN

To Order: www.OmahaSteaks.com/print71 or call 1-877-605-0496

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™