

My name is Ann-Marie Gavette. I am a resident of C street cooperative in Springfield, OR. I have worked with Square one Villages to secure a safe and stable living situation for myself and my autistic son. When my children were both diagnosed with a severe neurodevelopmental disorder, I was still in school studying education, and my husband/partner was just establishing his career in law. For us to thoroughly, holistically, and immediately give our full attention to our children's development and intervention, I chose to pause my education and focus full-time on my children. My partner chose to pause his 70-hr. week Law career, and he slowly transitioned careers to something less demanding, to be available for the children's needs. At this time in our lives, we would have otherwise been establishing ourselves in careers and saving to buy a home. Because most of our extra income went towards biomedical treatments for our children's underlying co-morbid disorders, we became long-term renters. We also received assistance from Homes for Good, which helped us afford to live with only one parent working.

While renting was a functional option for us, it did put us at the mercy of landlords and property management companies, as well as the requirements and limitations that fall under Homes for Goods Guidelines. (Homes for good was incredibly helpful for a situation overall.) Although, due to these outlying factors beyond our control, our situation could not enable us to establish a long-term stable home environment for our children. We found ourselves effectively establishing routines and therapies, and then needing to stop and get ready to move.

As renters we had a full house. We hired full-time ABA therapists, early interventionists, and in-home DSP workers to give our children a functional and enriching environment developmentally. This was exceedingly difficult at times as renters. The unfortunate thing is that we had to re-establish ourselves many times over. We were forced to move four to five times during the kids' formative years. While all children struggle with and suffer due to instability, ASD kids struggle much more. Children with Autism struggle with minor and daily transitions of all kinds. This is not to also mention the health hazards, mainly mold, that my environmentally sensitive children were exposed to in low-income rentals. For these reasons, this caused regression in both children many times over. It was difficult to have to reestablish routines, spaces, and addresses, as well as finances. Our experience is that most landlords will take your deposit, no matter how much you care for or put work into the house. We had to fight a few times to try to get our deposit back or at least not pay extra money to pay for a landlord's next remodel. (This takes money out of our pockets which we would otherwise use to pay for our children's therapies and medicine). At a certain point, for many reasons, it became essential for the children's development to separate them for a time (or buy an extra-large home, obviously not an option.) This is when I found C Street co-op.

Now that I am at C Street, I have a stable and clean environment for my son. I no longer must worry about when I'm going to have to pack up my son's things and introduce him to an unfamiliar and new environment. I do not have to work many hours out of the home to afford to live here. This enables me to get my life and my son's life back on track. It has been amazing for us. My older son can thrive living alone with his Dad, and get his individual needs met. The boys are able to spend time together in a functional way, where they do not trigger each other's stress and stereotypical behaviors on a day-to-day basis. I can implement consistent therapies and interventions in my home myself. I can focus on my continual research into treating my son's co-morbidities, as well as finding effective strategies for addressing his delays and education. I am also able to get myself back into school online and finish my degree in Special Education (after postponing for 10 yrs ). This is so that I can support both my son and

myself. With an advanced degree, I hope to save money and eventually buy us a property together in the future. These things would never be possible without square one and the C Street co-op. I am extremely blessed to have this option in a financial climate where so many people are making low wages and rents and mortgages are extremely high.