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Mother of three finds refuge, new life at Millennium Place

By RICK YENCER

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MUNCIE -- Jamie Griffith finds sanctuary living at Millennium Place.

Abandoned and abused as a child, Griffith went from shelter to shelter after separating herself from her hometown of Kokomo and an abusive relationship with the father of two of her children.

"I have never had anybody to depend on other than my grandparents," said Griffith, sitting in her Millennium apartment and surrounded by pictures of her children, Elijah, 4; Nataleigh, 2, and Kadynce, 1. "I had to be responsible."

Signs of home are found right as you walk through the doorway of Griffith's three-bedroom apartment. A shelf has a row of Boyds Bears. And a cloth cover draped on a wall bears the words, "Where there is room in the heart, there is always room in the house."

Griffith is one of the faces of the new Millennium Place, an affordable housing neighborhood that replaced the old concrete-block public housing of Munsyana Homes.

The pretty bright houses along South Madison Street -- some already built, others in the process -- represent a new neighborhood that will include a new community center in Heekin Park and a grocery store, possibly along Madison Street.

Only 22, Griffith juggles two jobs and three children, trying to rebuild her life after recovering from physical and emotional abuse.

"A lot of people would have already given up," said Griffith, who spent time at the Shepherd Center, a transitional housing facility for women.

"I got all of this by myself and bust my butt paying my bills," she said.

Griffith pays \$33 a month in rent and another \$92 for electricity, based on her limited income. She works at Crestview Golf Course and just got a security job at the Delaware County Youth Opportunity Center.

It's a hectic morning and night when Griffith's children are home as she fixes breakfast and dinner. During the day they go to daycare.

"We talk about how the day went, and there is family time and story time," she said. "Then we get up and do it all over again."

Griffith likes the layout of the new Millennium apartment, which has living and dining areas downstairs and bedrooms upstairs. It also has amenities such as a microwave, a dishwasher, washer-dryer hook-ups and porches and patios.

There's also plans for a new playground and park to be built late in the summer of 2006 between the Millennium buildings on Madison and Elm streets for the many families already in the neighborhood.

Griffith noticed many people living in poverty since her move to Muncie and Millennium. And she found plenty of human services waiting to help those in need.

"I can come here and have a home with my children," she said.

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