

Faith Based and Community Initiatives



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Project Heritage – The Heritage House **The Child and Adult Care Food Program**

A Story of Success.

At a time when Luz Lomeli, 24, and her three young children were struggling financially and looking for a place to stay, they happened to come across a place that has provided them with the warmth and comfort they needed: the Heritage House Center run by Project Heritage.

“I had nowhere to go, I was really down on my luck,” says Lomeli, about the time that she started staying at the Heritage House. Over a period of two months, she was able to get her children settled and well-fed, find a job, and begin to turn her life back in the direction she wanted. “I had no food, no money,” she says. “They stuck by me 100 percent. I have no bad things to say about this place, they have helped me out so much.”

Lomeli has three young children: Alexis, 7; Cristian, 5; and Alberto, 3. The residential quarters at Heritage House Center provide her with the perfect setting for providing for her children and getting her own life back together. The rooms each have one large king-size bed and a set of bunk beds, plus a small living area with a couch and a television. Although the rooms have no kitchen, they have a refrigerator for drinks and snacks. A free dinner is provided every night in the dining hall, and breakfast is available.

Lomeli was able to find a job at a meat-packing plant that is within walking distance of Heritage House Center, and a friend in the residence is babysitting her children during the day.



Luz Lomeli and two of her children at the Heritage House.

Mission.

Project Heritage provides a hand up to the working poor, regardless of their ethnic background – through job training, education, childcare, housing and emotional and spiritual healing.

How the Initiative is Helping.

Project Heritage has recently been approved by FNS for federal reimbursement for meals under the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Under this program, homeless children and children from temporarily displaced families can receive up to three meals each day through shelters that operate the program. Project Heritage became aware that it qualified for this reimbursement as a result of the FNS regional office outreach efforts on behalf of the Faith-Based and Community Initiative.

She and the children attend church every Sunday, and Bible study during the week.

“I love church here, the ministry is fabulous. Everyone is so nice, they treat you like family.”

In addition to benefiting from the free meals served by Project Heritage, she also receives assistance via the FNS Food Stamp Program, which she says is also a tremendous help. She hopes eventually to save enough to be able to move out into her own place, but in the meantime, Project Heritage is happy to help the Lomelis, and they are happy to stay.

“Luz is really one of our great success stories,” says Minister Jay Alexander. “She has been so diligent, even though she has faced some pretty tough obstacles. She has never lost hope and has never given up.”

The Organization.

Project Heritage started as a ministry effort with the Heritage Christian Center and has now expanded to become a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to helping people rebuild and reshape their lives.

Stats.

Founded: *1997*

Started USDA-FNS Program:
May 2004

Facility:
The Heritage House Center, 170 Rooms

Project Heritage is an extended stay program designed to be a support system for those who require extra help getting back on their feet due to financial crisis, loss, eviction, release from incarceration, drug or alcohol addiction, and the many other things that breakdown the family structure. The goal is to help families remain united under one roof.

The Heritage House Center is a 170-room hotel in Denver. The program allows families and individuals who enter to move from a state of crisis into clean, safe housing, then into permanent housing. In addition to low cost housing, the program provides access to a clothing bank, free meals nightly, breakfast Monday through Friday, support groups/classes, church services on the premises, bible study, employment resources and referrals, case management, and bus tokens for the first 30 days.