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KATRINA VICTIM MAKES MOST OF OPPORTUNITY IN CALIFORNIA
Housing Authority tenant Kajuanza Smith reaches milestone on the eve of Katrina's 2 year anniversary.

San Bernardino, CA — Housing Authority of San Bernardino County tenant Kajuanza Smith attains her Licensed Vocational Nurse license from Four D College in Colton, just two years after being displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

A single mother with 3 boys and only \$200 to her name, Smith left Louisiana for California immediately following the Katrina disaster. The American Red Cross assisted her family and placed them in a Best Western Hotel where they lived for four months.

"I wanted to get my family into a better position financially," said Smith. She made the decision to be a nurse while living at the hotel.

In October 2005, the Housing Authority issued Smith a housing voucher through the Katrina Disaster Housing Assistance Program. A Katrina victim without an income, Smith had to wait until February 2006 before finally finding a landlord willing to lease her a unit.

"We lost everything in the hurricane, it didn't make sense to stay in Louisiana," said Smith, who added, "When we arrived in San Bernardino there a lot of people wanting to help."

Housing Authority Director Daniel Nackerman commented that Smith turned a negative situation around by having a positive attitude and utilizing the financial assistance offered by San Bernardino's local agencies.

"It's pretty amazing, many people affected by Katrina are still struggling to get their lives back, I'm glad the Housing Authority had a hand in helping her," said Nackerman. "Kajuanza's determination to reach her goals has been an inspiration to all of us at the Authority."

Smith recently passed her board exam and plans to continue pursuing a nursing career and eventually becoming a Registered Nurse.

It's estimated that 17,000 individuals have come to California in search of a new life after being displaced by Katrina.

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The Housing Authority has assisted 25 families through its Katrina Disaster Housing Assistance Program.

In addition to its public housing programs, the Housing Authority offers five programs designed to promote economic self-sufficiency including the Family Self Sufficiency Programs, Homeownership Preparation and Education (HOPE) Program, Resident Services Program, and Neighborhood Networks.

The Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino is one of the largest in California, providing the critical resource of housing to a clientele of which the majority are seniors, persons with disabilities and children. From providing housing and home ownership to job training and child care, the Housing Authority helps tens of thousands of people elevate their lives every day.

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