

## Imagination is a powerful thing

by Steven Wilson, Ed.D.

Imagine being a first-time, expectant mother with no real support network to turn to.

You're living in a county with a 47% childhood poverty rate. The number crunchers say most impoverished kids in this county live in [female headed homes](#).

The overall poverty rate is nearly 12% and six cities in Ohio rank in the 100 top U.S. cities with [the highest eviction rates](#) nationwide.

Housing for poor families is in a constant state of shortage. In fact, research says median rent throughout Ohio has steadily risen since 1960 – risen to the tune of 61% higher – but the median income of renters has only risen 5%.

For a Children's Home client this scenario wasn't an exercise in the power of imagination. It was a very personal reality.

But, she imagined a better future for her and her daughter and is blazing her own trail.

This is her story.

"This is why we do what we do," said Jessica Kennedy, family development specialist at The Children's Home. "Kristen was initially referred to our agency prenatally. Right away she struck me as a determined and motivated woman."

Kennedy said Kristen illustrates what can be accomplished with some help and being linked with the right resources. Shortly after Kristen had her baby last February, she enrolled in school, began working in a medical service-related field, bought a car and moved into a safe place to live.

"This program with The Children's Home helps you set realistic goals and meet them to have a better future for you and your baby," Kristen said.

Kennedy said her client is being modest.

"She works full-time and takes care of her daughter on her own," she said. "Kristen overcame a lot of obstacles and still stays focused on her dreams."

At Kristen's request, we are only using her first name.



The support didn't stop when Kristen's baby was born. Kennedy still looks forward to working with Kristen as she continues her resolute journey to make the best possible life for her baby.

She said she helped Kristen use some exercises to strengthen her daughter's legs and motor skills after Kristen said she had been concerned about her baby not walking.

Their work paid off.

"On her baby's first birthday Kristen sent me a video, very early in the morning, of her daughter walking all over the living room!" said Kennedy.

Kristen's next goals include starting school in the fall and finishing her bachelor's in nursing.

And she's already enrolled.

"She's a fantastic mom and always striving to do better in life for herself and her baby," said Kennedy. "I'm very proud of this mom and everything she's done."

Kristen said she recommends this program that specialists like Jessica Kennedy and her colleagues facilitate on behalf of The Children's Home.

"This program is definitely a great way to have a mentor on what things to expect when you have a baby growing into a toddler," she said. "Especially if you're a first-time mom."

