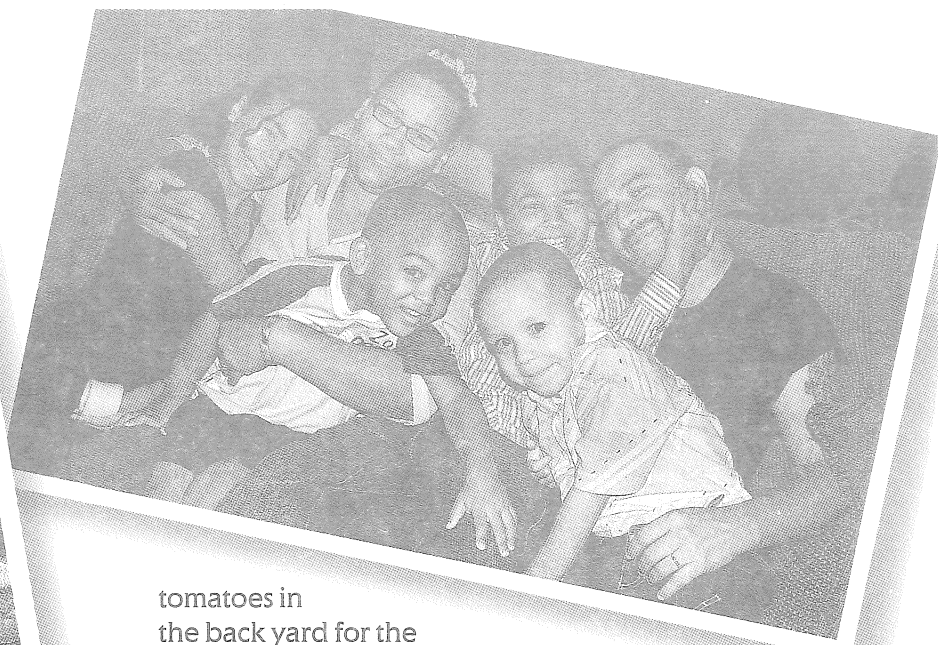




Pedro Castro recently told a crowd of Habitat supporters that, although it's been several months since he moved into his Habitat home on Wilson Street in New Haven, he still frequently wakes up in the middle of the night and touches the walls around him to remind himself that he really does own a house. Pedro and Ginette and their three children: Kereyn (11), Pedro Jr. (8), and Josue (3), moved into their Habitat home in July.

Although Pedro has lived in New Haven for more than 11 years and works full-time for a local business, saving for a down payment on a house while paying high rent was not an option for the Castro family. Pedro and Ginette decided to apply to Habitat for Humanity after it became clear that their current living situation was becoming increasingly unsafe for their kids. As Ginette said, "Just about every time we stepped outside there'd be drug dealers and tough guys hanging around right outside the door. More and more we weren't letting the kids go outside at all. It wasn't good for them to be trapped inside and fearful." Pedro was raised in New York City projects and was determined that his children be raised in a different environment.

Now Pedro Jr. rides his bike almost every day, often visiting his new friend down the street. Everyone in the family enjoys sitting on the porch and talking with their neighbors, another equally terrific Habitat family, the Trinidad-Matos family. Pedro's family grew



tomatoes in the back yard for the first time this summer, and they're making plans about landscaping next spring and holding cookouts.

Habitat sent a photographer to the Castro house to take a family portrait. The kids were so proud of their bedrooms that they insisted she take pictures of them sitting on their beds. When we asked what they like most about the house, the entire family agreed that it was wonderful to have two bathrooms and more privacy in general.

Ginette was thrilled that she could hang family photographs and decorations on the walls without violating rental rules.

The house isn't huge (1400 sq feet), but it's well designed and they make full use of the unfinished basement. They may be the first Habitat family to have a full musical set up in the basement, including piano and guitars. Ginette is musical director at her congregation and they use the basement to practice. The kids use the other half for playing.

This sense of ownership is still new for Pedro and Ginette. Gradually, they'll begin doing home maintenance and working around the house like old pros. Pedro said he has a distinct advantage over non-Habitat homeowners because he helped build the house and knows where every stud is and where the electrical wires are. He claims he's going to live in the house forever and be buried in the back yard. Here at Habitat, we believe him. We know we chose the right family. We also know that many more families, just as deserving, are waiting in the wings. Please consider donating to Habitat to support our Homebuyers' Program.

"He still frequently wakes up in the middle of the night and touches the walls around him to remind himself that he really does own a house."



**Habitat
for Humanity®**
OF GREATER NEW HAVEN