

The Cruz Family Story

Paul Cruz is father to three girls, Sarah and Samantha (age 13) and Alicia (age 10). They have been living at RHTH for the past three months. They were referred to RHTH when applying for CalWORKS at the DPSS office. Previously, the Cruz's were sharing an apartment with some good friends in the San Fernando Valley. It was a good situation, but the owner decided that it was getting too crowded and his family needed more privacy – a decision that Paul understood and respects. From there, they moved in with Paul's sister in Whittier, where they stayed for three months. Unfortunately, his job was still out in the valley, so he had to travel far from Whittier for work each day, leaving very little time for him to see the girls – they were usually asleep by the time he returned home. Once three months had passed, his sister's landlord said the apartment was too crowded, and decided that Paul and his girls would have to move out. Paul began searching for apartments and for shelters at the same time. Coming to RHTH was their first time living in a shelter; Paul says he was surprised at how well it has been going. His girls are happy here, and that is what's most important to him.

"It feels like we have our own place." He felt comfortable once he saw the size of the rooms at RHTH and experiences how friendly residents are. Paul feels that they have built relationships they will continue upon leaving RHTH.

In regard to the public's view of homelessness, Paul says that everyone has a different idea, but that some think people become homeless because they don't pay attention or don't try hard enough. He would even say there was a point where he thought this himself. He wants people to know that so many factors play into homelessness – it is not just one simple explanation. He says it doesn't matter how much you prepare, homelessness can happen to anyone. He said although working through homelessness makes him very tired, "Even if I'm homeless, I can accept it. I'm lucky that I'm at Rio Hondo and they're helping me more than I expected."

Paul will begin attending school in September of 2010, taking classes in computer and English. They plan to settle in Whittier once they leave RHTH so the girls can continue attending the schools there.