



Keilano's on his way Homeless youth seizes opportunities

As a young teenager, Keilano says he always thought about the future. His first goal was to get through school, then go to college and get on his feet. But during his freshman year in high school, Keilano's life changed dramatically. Because of circumstances in his home, he found he could no longer live with his family. At age 17, Keilano found himself on his own.

Through his high school years, when "home" meant hopping from couch to couch, staying with friends when he could and other places when he had to, he remained focused and earned his diploma from Minnesota Transitions Charter School. "I worked very hard to keep my struggles hidden, so most people didn't know I was homeless, but I did. Sometimes I had a hard time, but I made it," Keilano says.

That's when Nicollet Square came into his life. Even though his Mom couldn't parent him the usual way, she was still concerned about him. "My Mom called me out of the blue, told me about Nicollet Square and said I should apply." He moved in on February 1, 2011. Nicollet Square, developed by the **Plymouth Neighborhood Foundation**, offers apartment space, support, and education and job opportunities to youth transitioning from foster care or homelessness.

"Nicollet Square has changed my life so much—I smile everyday that I wake up here," Keilano says. Shortly after he moved in, he got an internship job at the local YMCA through Nicollet Square's Work Fast Program. That internship turned into a permanent job working with young children in a child development program. His job at the YMCA fits very well with Keilano's commitment to his own physical fitness. This fall, Keilano plans to begin a year-long program to prepare him for work as a fitness trainer—skills he will be able to use at the YMCA.

Keilano's ambitions don't stop there. "My dream is to be a carpenter and build my own house," he says. He was introduced to carpentry during a summer program at Minnesota Transitions School, now he hopes to use those skills to build homes, apartments, and buildings like Nicollet Square. "Making the most of this opportunity I have at Nicollet Square is a big priority for me. I'm very grateful for what I have."

[Plymouth Church Neighborhood Foundation](#)

Twin Cities LISC's total investment to date in PCNF: \$1,310,045