



*"You have to focus on one family at a time."  
"We're looking to break a cycle of issues and poverty."*



REALTOR® MAGAZINE'S  
**2012 GOOD NEIGHBOR**

**MICHAEL CAMPBELL**

CRS, SFR

Coldwell Banker  
Residential  
Brokerage,  
Tucson, Ariz.

**CONTACT**

[mrcampbell@comcast.net](mailto:mrcampbell@comcast.net)

[MyTucsonBroker.com](http://MyTucsonBroker.com)

**The Hearth Foundation Inc.**  
[TheHearthFoundation.org](http://TheHearthFoundation.org)

By Erica Christoffer

# Building Communities within the Community

Knowing what it's like to emerge from homelessness, **Michael Campbell** works to provide safe transitional housing for women and children in need.

Two stints of homelessness as a young child imbued Michael Campbell with the desire to help others avoid the same desperate circumstances. Campbell was just 2 years old when his mother, Jean, fled his alcoholic father in California. When he was 9, she left her second husband in Moline, Ill. "We slept in the car for days. We were wearing the same clothes. We weren't able to bathe," he says, until they found a boarding house where his mother, his younger brother, and he shared a single room.

The family's life eventually stabilized when Jean found a steady job in Kankakee, Ill. But those tumultuous

experiences were pivotal for Campbell, CRS, SFR. Eventually, they led to his involvement with The Hearth Foundation in Tucson, Ariz., which provides transitional housing for single mothers facing tremendous hardship.

The foundation's work starts with short-term transitional housing for women and children in crisis. It runs the facilities through its nonprofit partner, New Beginnings. The shelter apartments can house up to 13 families who stay for up to 90 days, serving more than 500 women and children each year. The foundation also owns eight duplexes, providing longer-term, two-



to four-year transitional housing for women and children based on financial need.

As president of the organization, Campbell spearheaded a major reorganization. He created a mission statement and developed goals for expansion, writing Hearth's first long-range plan, rewriting the bylaws, and hiring the first full-time employee.

Campbell was the first in his family to go to college. In 1982, he moved to Tucson to complete his master's degree in lighting design at the University of Arizona and, after working in that field briefly, he became a real estate practitioner in 1984. He has worked as an associate with Coldwell Banker in Tucson for the past 28 years. In 2003, he joined the board of the Hearth Foundation, which was founded in 1987 by the Tucson Association of REALTORS® and the Arizona Certified Residential Specialists.

One of the biggest changes Campbell made was to move the foundation's office out of the Tucson Association of REALTORS® building to a nearby duplex at its transitional housing site, which puts the board in closer proximity to the property and its residents. "People began to look at us as an independent entity," he says. "It helped us establish independence and more respect in the nonprofit world."

The foundation is not only gaining admirers, it's also resetting people's lives. Four years ago, Taquiya Freeman became pregnant during her senior year of high school and was subsequently kicked out of her home in New York. She moved into a maternity residence and gave birth on her high school graduation day. Although she'd planned to attend the University of Arizona in Tucson, she delayed entering and found work but held on to her college dream. Once she'd saved enough for initial tuition costs and a one-way ticket for her and her year-old son, Freeman boarded a plane to Arizona and never looked back. She now lives in one of the Hearth Foundation's long-term duplexes while she balances work, parenting, and college. "It's put normalcy in my life," she says. "This is a stepping stone."

Under Campbell's leadership, the organization was awarded a \$719,000 grant from the Arizona State Department of Housing. The funds are being used to gut the aging duplexes, which are getting new windows, floors, appliances, furnishings, HVAC units, sidewalks, and a security gate. "Our feeling is if what we offer isn't good enough for our daughters to live in, then it's not good enough for anybody," Campbell says. Construction should be completed by February.

The Hearth Foundation is seeking grants to build four more long-term units and a community center where life-skills classes would be offered in everything from cooking to job-hunting. There are also plans to build another 14 transitional homes on another prop-

erty the group owns. Campbell estimates that there are nearly 400 women with children in need of housing in Tucson. "These aren't the people we see on the street with a tin can out. These are people from all socioeconomic backgrounds," he says. "People have lost their homes and their jobs at every level of the economy in this country. You never know if it's going to be you or me or someone close to you who needs help."

Campbell's mother died of lung cancer in 1984 at the age of 56. But her fortitude during her difficult years continues to inspire him. "She was my best friend. She was also the strongest person I ever met in my life. My mother refused to give up on anything," he recalls.

"There was no Hearth Foundation when I was young," Campbell says. "It was my mother's dream to do what I'm doing." ■

