

# **Why I champion the Cumberland as CCEC**

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My life has been constantly on the move to a different home, foster family, a different state or from the farm to the city. There was no feeling of security, comfort or any sense of belonging or identity. I developed the habit of having the necessities, nothing more. I expected that it would be necessary to move on at any time.

Jacho and I moved to Oregon and purchased our first home. We had our first pet and volunteered at a non-profit for the first time. Everything felt new and for the first time I felt at home, our home. We made friends of our neighbors, helped each other out when needed and Sharon brought us her homemade cookies –just because! We worked hard on our home to update its' utilities and made decisions on making it comfortable for us like installing a gas fireplace instead of the existing wooden fireplace. We worked hard and learned a lot and it was all a pleasure for us to be able to do so. We repeated this several times in different homes in Albany, always with the idea of Albany being our home.

It was only after restoring the 1892 Keyhole House that I began to look around us and realize that it wasn't just the house that needed nurturing but the community as well. I have witnessed some challenging events happening in the area previously. More recently, I have witnessed the increase of new faces and new families with hope and dreams moving into the east side neighborhood. I have also noticed that I have met neighbors along the way that have come and some are still here. We have shared these experiences of both good and bad but it wasn't quite so bad because we weren't experiencing it alone. Living in a place that feels like home, that comforts me and having neighbors that know my name and have a sense of who I am makes our neighborhood a community. I need the CCEC to provide a safe place to meet, to share ideas, skills, stories of sadness and stories of deep happiness. Our children need to hear these stories to know it is possible and to strive for this feeling of belonging and strength, together.