



Marilyn Everett has a lot to be happy about, now that she has place of her own. A portable radio on her kitchen counter plays gospel music all day long, and she likes to dance to the music when she's home.

It was a long, hard road to where she is today. Before Everett moved in to the Sea Island Apartments on Johns Island in September 2004, she lived out of her Ford Explorer for weeks after sleeping on couches in the homes of friends for two months. When she finally moved into her apartment, she said, she was driving on fumes and penniless.

"Thank God my children were grown," she said.

Everett worked as a nurse for about 30 years in St. Louis, earning a good living as a single mother, until her asthma and other health problems forced her to retire in 1999. She moved to North Charleston in 2001 with her 26-year-old daughter, Evette, who was serving her second four-year stretch with the Navy.

Everett's daughter finished her service in the summer of 2004 and moved to Atlanta to earn a business degree. That left Everett with no place to live, but she had good friends here, she said, and they helped her for a while.

She had reserved a spot in the apartment complex where she lives now, but those units were not ready until three months after she lost her home. A local non-profit housing developer, the Humanities Foundation, built the place for people like Everett — people who cannot afford to pay market prices for housing.

"All I had to hold on to was these apartments opening up," she said. "I just thank God for blessing me to be here."

Everett lives on a meager federal disability subsidy. The Humanities project, built with federal tax credits and grants, allows Everett's rent to remain affordable while she lives comfortably in a nice apartment. A year after it was built, her immaculate home still smells brand new. She hopes to stay there a long time, she said.

Everett keeps busy these days. Aside from numerous doctor visits, she volunteers with a nearby nursing home and at Our Lady of Mercy Community Outreach Services Inc. Everett also is an active member of Living Word Christian Center in Goose Creek. She began worshiping there when she lived at the former Navy base, and now it's much harder for her to get to services. She depends on fellow church members to drive her, since she had to get rid of car last year. She said she hopes to be able to buy a small used car some day.

She said she likes living in rural Johns Island because it's quiet and peaceful.