

## A New Home At Bluebonnet Studios After Foster Care

Mu'Stapha Feika describes himself as extremely introverted, but if you ask him about basketball his eyes light up and he talks about his dream of becoming a coach. The soft-spoken 20-year-old spent most of his childhood living in foster care and said he kept people at a distance. He disliked school and found solace in basketball, his favorite sport. Now, Mu'Stapha is entering a new phase in his life, having aged out of the foster care system. He lives at our Bluebonnet Studios community and is looking forward to his future.

**"I want to grow out of this shell," Mu'Stapha said. "I want to be more welcoming and involved with people."**

Mu'Stapha moved into Bluebonnet earlier this year. He is one of six residents who live with us through a partnership with fellow nonprofit Upbring. Upbring helps young adults aging out of the foster care system successfully transition to independent living and self-sufficiency through housing placements, case management, and college and career planning.

For Mu'Stapha, this support helped him secure a job and enroll in courses at Austin Community College, where he is majoring in kinesiology.

The journey to get to this point in his life has been hard and inconsistent. Although Mu'Stapha had positive experiences with some of his foster families, he never felt a real sense of belonging.

At the age of 8, he moved to the U.S. from Liberia with his aunt and two half-sisters in pursuit of a better life. He only vaguely remembers his parents and his home country. Once in the

U.S., his aunt struggled to provide for him. Child Protective Services intervened and placed him in the foster care system, where he bounced around for years. In total, Mu'Stapha lived in three homeless shelters and four foster homes.

Growing up, he didn't place much importance on school and struggled to fit in. His classmates teased him for his broken English and he intentionally kept his circle small by making few friends.

When he turned 18, Mu'Stapha moved out of his final foster home. Despite his difficult adolescence, he felt ready to be on his own. He saw opportunity when he moved into Bluebonnet.

**"I feel really blessed," Mu'Stapha said. "I plan to make something out of this."**

So far, Mu'Stapha has made quite the impression at Bluebonnet. He was awarded our first-ever "Good Neighbor" award for going out of his way to help his fellow residents. He has also started a Bible study in an effort to build community. He said his strong faith has helped give him purpose and direction in life.

Looking to the future, Mu'Stapha hopes to one day become a professional basketball coach and inspire and encourage people, like so many have done for him. He is already utilizing his newfound confidence to build lasting connections with the people around him.

**"I see people and I try to relate to them," Mu'Stapha said. "I would like to extend a helping hand."**



## Brighten the Holidays for Your Neighbors

The holidays are right around the corner, and we've got an easy and fun way for you to support local families in need. Many of our residents won't be able to fulfill their holiday wish lists on their own, but you can help!



**Below are three ways you can make a real difference this season:**

### SPONSOR A FAMILY FOR THE HOLIDAYS

*An incredibly rewarding group service activity!*

### DONATE TO OUR HOLIDAY DRIVE

*Another meaningful opportunity to provide gifts for our residents.*

### MAKE AN ONLINE DONATION

*We'll go holiday shopping for you!*

GET INVOLVED:

[foundcom.org/about/holiday-assistance-program](http://foundcom.org/about/holiday-assistance-program)

QUESTIONS? Contact: [Meghan.Hein@foundcom.org](mailto:Meghan.Hein@foundcom.org) or 512-610-4008

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: COMMUNITY TAX CENTERS

It's almost tax season again, and we're busy recruiting volunteers for our Community Tax Centers. Next year will mark our 14th season of providing free tax preparation for hard-working, low-income families in the Austin area. We rely on 600 volunteers in order to serve more than 20,000 of our fellow community members every year.

Josie Torres is a native Austinite and has been a dedicated Community Tax Center volunteer for more than a decade. She loves helping clients get the full refunds they have earned and appreciates our high-quality service. "Some people might think that a 'free' service somehow means it's lower quality, but I would ask them to come to one of the Community Tax Centers and see our well-run machine in action," Josie said. "We treat our clients like friends and neighbors because *they are* friends and neighbors."



To volunteer with our Community Tax Centers, please visit [foundcom.org/get-involved/volunteer](http://foundcom.org/get-involved/volunteer)



3036 South First Street  
 Austin, TX 78704  
 512.447.2026  
 FoundCom.org



### Board of Directors

Tom Chmielewski, Chair	Dalton Duffie
Jewel Arrington	David Hart
Yvette Boatwright	Freddy Marichal
Perla Cavazos	Selina Serna
Andrew Clements	David Tandy
Kellee Coleman	Michelle Wallis
Adrianna Cuellar Rojas	Alicia Wong
Charles DiTullio	
Walter Moreau, Executive Director	

Foundation Communities provides attractive, affordable homes and free on-site support services for thousands of working families with kids, as well as veterans, seniors, and individuals with disabilities. We offer an innovative, proven model that empowers our residents and neighbors to achieve educational success, financial stability, and healthier lifestyles. We own and operate 23 properties in Austin and North Texas.

### INSURE CENTRAL TEXAS

[www.InsureCentralTX.org](http://www.InsureCentralTX.org)

MARKETPLACE HEALTH INSURANCE, MEDICAID/CHIP & MAP  
**Open Enrollment: now through December 15, 2017**

- > Affordable Care Act is still the law
- > Financial help is available
- > New insurance company = more choices for 2018
- > We do the research for you so you can get the best deal!

**THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:** Central Health, St David's Foundation, Seton, & the City of Austin

## FOUNDATION COMMUNITIES UPDATES

### THANK YOU!

2017 was an extraordinary year for us, thanks to your continued support. We welcomed 750 residents home at three new communities: Bluebonnet Studios, Lakeline Station, and Live Oak Trails. Leasing is also underway at Cardinal Point, our newest community in Northwest Austin. Cardinal Point will be the first affordable housing in the Four Points area, and we look forward to opening our doors to 120 new families soon. The 20-apartment addition to our Garden Terrace community will be completed early next year, providing more supportive housing for single adults. Last, but certainly not least, we can't wait to break ground in the Mueller neighborhood in East Austin. The Jordan at Mueller, our future family community, will open in 2019.

**As we continue to build more affordable housing in neighborhoods all over Austin, we have also expanded the scale and scope of our support services:**



#### EDUCATION

Our 12 on-site Community Learning Centers now serve 1,000 kids year-round. The students who attend our after-school and summer learning programs have an average 3.43 GPA.



#### FINANCIAL STABILITY

Our free Community Tax Centers in Austin, Dallas, and Arlington filed over 35,000 tax returns for low-income families this year, generating \$57 million in refunds. Hardworking families count on these refunds to put food on the table, pay bills, and save for their children's future.



#### HEALTH

Since 2014, our Insure Central Texas program has helped more than 22,800 individuals enroll in affordable health insurance plans and, in many cases, access life-saving medical treatment.

**It has been an incredible year, but there's plenty of work left to do.**

With your support, we will continue to grow and serve more people. Please consider making a contribution to us at year's end. You can donate online at [www.FoundCom.org](http://www.FoundCom.org). Thank you from all of us at Foundation Communities!