

# HUD secretary Ben Carson tours Sarah's House, a Catholic Charities shelter

FORT MEADE - Ben Carson, the secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), on March 23 visited Sarah's House, a Catholic Charities of Baltimore shelter for families dealing with homelessness.

Last year marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sarah's House, which is managed by a partnership among Catholic Charities, the U.S. Army and Anne Arundel County. According to Catholic Charities, it is one of four emergency shelters in the U.S. that are on an Army base and which welcome families.

Carson toured former barracks, part of a program which in fiscal year 2017 served 471 people from 185 families, and participated in a 23-minute roundtable discussion that included Col. Thomas Rickard, base commander; officials from Catholic Charities; two current clients of Sarah's House, and a former client.

"It's easy to fall on hard times," Carson told them. "Anybody who has been there can tell you, it not a defect in character. Frequently, it's a defect in opportunity."

The discussion included Tiffany Miller, a single mother employed in customer service who described a "lot of drama" in her life that brought her to Sarah's House; Eugene Terry, a single father who works as a cook at a nearby Chili's and recently moved into a Sarah's House apartment with his five-year-old daughter; and Kianna Harris, a former resident, in both the shelter and transitional housing offered by Sarah's House.

Harris, 27, came to Sarah's House a decade ago, after her mother was evicted from their apartment in Germantown. She spent seven months there while completing her secondary education at Meade High School. She worked fast-food jobs, got a college degree and is employed by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, monitoring young offenders in St. Mary's County.

"I found hope and encouragement here," said Harris, the mother of three sons. "Everything Sarah's House told me they would do, they did."

In addition to housing, Sarah's House offers casework assistance, parenting classes and child care. Through Arundel Community Development Services, Sarah's House receives from HUD \$300,000 in project based rental assistance, \$140,000 in rapid rehousing grants, and \$85,000 in emergency solutions grants.

Carson, who experienced poverty as a child before becoming a world renowned neurosurgeon at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, the author of bestsellers such as "Gifted Hands," and campaigning for the Republican nomination in the 2016 presidential election, did not take questions from the media.

According to HUD.gov, its budget for fiscal year 2017 was \$48.9 billion. In February, President Donald Trump's administration proposed a 2019 federal budget that included \$41.24 billion for HUD. According to Catholic News Service, that cut "more than \$4 billion in rental assistance programs, particularly for housing vouchers and public housing."

An addendum to the White House proposal added \$2 billion to the HUD budget, much of it to go to the elderly and people with disabilities.

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