

# **TONY FRAZIER**

## **Winner of the 2017 Family of Distinction Award**

### **Presented at the Illinois Community Action Agencies Annual Conference**

#### **Nominated by the City of Rockford Human Services Dept./Community Services Division**

#### *A Community Action Agency*

Tony Frazier first came to our office in 2009 – 21 years old, homeless, broke and alone. Tony suffered much abuse in his life, became involved in the DCFS system, and eventually lost both of his parents to crime and prison. His grandmother took him in but passed away. Tony was always driven, but had no job, no support system and lacked education.

When Tony was referred to our office, we began offering him case management services. We helped him get his own apartment, secure furniture and household goods, enrolled him in the LIHEAP energy assistance program, and continued to provide encouragement and support. While receiving a short term rental assistance subsidy, Tony worked any temporary job he could get while attending the YouthBuild program, which provided vocational skills training in construction, leadership development, GED programming, and other support.

Tony completed the Youth Build program in August of 2011, receiving a Certificate of Merit and recognition for his Outstanding Volunteer Service. But he still had not earned his GED.

Tony no longer received rent support when he reached the maximum income guideline after gaining employment at a manufacturing job. Determined to pass his GED, he continued to study and attend GED prep classes. On December 3, 2013, his hard work paid off.

Today, Tony is renting a market rate apartment and working full-time at Chrysler. He has gained insurance through his job, and been able to purchase a car. When he is not at work, Tony likes to draw, work out in the boxing ring, and attend church. He also recently learned Tai Chi.

With a dream of eventually becoming a firefighter, Tony helps out at the Northwest Fire Department District and is a respected and valued volunteer. He is currently going through the City of Rockford Fire Department recruitment process.

Nominated by our agency, Tony received the Family of Distinction Award at the Illinois Community Action Conference in Springfield in 2017. Shortly after, his story was included in the Community Action annual report presented before the Rockford City Council. Hearing Tony's dream of becoming a firefighter, a Rockford firefighter sought us out and asked to be connected with him. A meeting was set, where he offered any assistance and mentoring that Tony needed, determined to help him reach his goal.

Tony is a survivor. Doggedly determined, he took his partnership with us in helping him achieve self-sufficiency very seriously. As Tony advises, "Cling to people who want to see you make it and who really believe in you." As Tony proved, it can, and does, work.