

# Family Place helps mother leave fear behind

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**By Analiz González**

*Buckner International*

MIDLAND—Ambra Riley spent the night in her daughters' room holding her baby tightly in her arms. She put something over the doorknob so she'd know if her husband tried to enter.

Her husband may have stolen her self-esteem and robbed her family of happiness, but he would not take her son, she reasoned.

"He probably wanted him because he was a boy," Riley said. "He was verbally abusive to my oldest daughter, always telling her she was fat and to get off the trampoline because she'd break it."

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Ambra Riley  
hugs her  
children  
outside her  
home at  
Buckner  
Family Place,  
a self-  
sufficiency  
program for  
single moms  
working  
towards a  
college  
education in  
Midland.  
(Photo by  
Jenny  
Pope/Buckner)

Riley spent two years hiding in her daughters' bedroom before she finally left the abusive household. And when she did, her world changed.

"I don't know why I didn't do it earlier," she said. "I guess I was trying to keep the family together. After I left (my husband) the first time, he told me I was going to hell for breaking up the family. I felt powerless, so I took him back.

"When we'd come back from church and turn the corner to come to our trailer home, the kids would be waiting to see if his truck was there. If it wasn't, there would be this sigh of relief. If he was, they would zip their mouths and go straight to their bedrooms."

After leaving the abusive situation, she sought help at Buckner Family Place in Midland. Family Place is a self-sufficiency program where single parents who are going to school can live with their children under a rental cost based on their family income.

Since Riley came to Family Place, she's been inspired to pass on the blessing she's received.

"I want to help people," she said. "I don't know what, but something amazing... ."

"They've really helped me out a lot. This is a wonderful program. If you want it to work out for you, it definitely will. The means are there. I never had a bed so pretty. I had a mattress that I slept on the floor before this. They furnished the apartment, and if we graduate, we get to take it with us. When I found Buckner, I was overwhelmed that I'd finally come to something that was going to help me.

### **Anxiety attacks**

"My oldest daughter used to have anxiety attacks because she thought my husband was going to kill me. She's having fewer breakdowns, and they all feel good that Mommy isn't stressed all the time."

Riley credits God with giving her the strength to leave her husband and for guiding her to Family Place. Before she left the abusive situation, she met a friend who was going to church. She contacted the pastor and attended that Sunday.

When the service ended, the pastor's daughter asked Riley her name. When she told her, she asked if she had a sister named Ashley.

"Apparently, the pastor's daughter had babysat for my sister, and my sister had asked her to pray for me," Riley said. "She told me she'd been praying

for me for years.”

Since then, the Riley children learned a lot about God’s concern for them and how God will fill the hole where their father used to be.

When Riley’s middle child was celebrating her birthday, she was scheduled to attend a supervised visit with her father. But she didn’t want to see him.

### **Power of prayer**

“She was crying, so we got on our knees and prayed together,” Riley said. “We asked God to find a way for her to not have to see him on her birthday. Then we drove there and she started crying when we pulled into the parking lot. Right when I parked the car, we got a call from the building and the visit was canceled. She started screaming. She turned to me and said, ‘Mama, God really does hear my prayers, huh?’

“That same day, the pastor’s daughter threw her a big birthday party with a theme of Disney princess. The whole wall was filled with presents. I could not have done that for her. God did that for her.”

Her son, now 3, used to feel bad that he didn’t have a father. But not anymore, she said, straightening up in her chair.

“Just because we don’t have a dad doesn’t mean we’re crippled. For Father’s Day, my son made me all this stuff and said, ‘I am so thankful that you are my Mom and my Daddy, too.’”

And Riley has grown a lot since she and her husband parted.

### **No more fear**

“I don’t fear him anymore,” she said. “I don’t fear. If he wants to do something to me, I’m ready for him. ... God has healed my mind. Now I know that I’m smart. I can learn. I can do this. I can take care of these kids.

I don't need a man in my life. ... I can wear whatever I want. I can come and go as I please. I can go to church all I want. My oldest daughter doesn't have to worry about the way she looks. I tell her every day that she's beautiful.

"Sometimes we'll drag my mattress out, and we'll all have a campout in the living room. All of us sleep together sometimes like we used to when I was with my husband. Back then we did it out of fear. Now, we do it because we want to."

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