

VOICE

Crescent

Apartments

**“BLESSINGS for
SO MANY”**

Nosa Zeinalabdin & AtifKambal - 9 year residents



My name is Nosa Zeinalabdin and my husband is AtifKambal. We came from Sudan to the United States in 2004. My husband and I got jobs at Dulles Airport. We had different shifts and lived in Arlington, it would take me three hours to get to work by bus. Later in the same year we moved to the Crescent Apartments in Reston and this was an answer to our dreams. My husband was 10 minutes away from work and I used my salary to decorate our two bedroom apartment and I took English classes in the neighborhood.

We now have three children, Nagi, our five year old completed Head Start at Forest Edge School. Nagi is ADHD and we have had support from the county for speech therapy. His class is predominantly Muslim students, and his teacher and the school are very knowledgeable about the Muslim culture and support our family's Islamic values. Last week a new student joined my son's Head Start class and he was able to translate the student's needs from Arabic to English for the teacher. Since Nagi's birth I have had two other children, Shadi who is almost two and Lema who is six months old.

The Crescent apartments have been our home for nine years. Its location provides excellent schools, cultural opportunities, English classes, and it is close to work for my husband. He works two jobs at Dulles. Our annual income is \$32,000 a year and it takes about 50% percent of our income to pay rent. We struggle financially to live in Reston, but every day we say this is worth it and the long hours my husband works to support our family. This year our mothers visited our Crescent home and in August our family is attending a wedding in Sudan. We will take our family pictures of our Crescent home with us to share with my 13 brothers and sisters. Thank you for the nine years at Crescent and we are hopeful our children will graduate from South Lake High School. Our family attends the Adams Center Friday Prayer group three blocks from our home.

Ana Carranza, 4 year resident



I am a single parent of two teenage daughters, ages 19 and 16. My family came to the United States in 2008 under the status of political asylum from Bolivia. I sought out the community of Reston through research in a Fairfax Public Library and later on the internet. The idea of living in a planned community with mixed income families, open green space, walkability and the possibility to remain in the same neighborhood for a long time appealed to my background in architecture and planning.

In May, I had the opportunity of meeting with the great Robert E. Simon Jr., the founder of Reston, whom I greatly admire. Lake Anne village is similar to my community of origin with “ La Plaza” and the Farmers Market , which are present in all Spanish-influenced Latin American cities. My family has thrived since coming to Crescent in Reston.

My daughters are honor students at South Lakes High School, and attend their girls club at Reston Study Center. My oldest daughter graduated in June and will be attending a Catholic College.

We are devoted members of St. Thomas a Beckett Catholic parish and have built our life around values of faith and commitment to God, and our call to seek holiness in our daily work.

I have recently completed a 25 week administrative support program at NVFS and Northern Virginia Community College and am seeking employment in the Reston area that can support my family and add to my earlier career in Bolivia as a cartographer and community planner. The Training Futures program has provided training skills and confidence I needed to see myself as a contributing member to the Reston Community and an opportunity to raise my family in the Reston community.

Andres Paz, 10 year resident



My name is Andres Paz; I'm a Dentist from Peru. I immigrated to this country in 1990 under the status of political asylum. I lived at Crescent Apartments from 1991-1992 then I bought my house and move to Herndon. I'm divorced now and have two daughters Andrea 26 an Angelica 25, both graduated, working and living on their own but in a very close contact with me, that is our Peruvian tradition.

Since I divorced, I was looking for a place to live and remember my time at Crescent, so I decided to come back and I have been living here for 8 years. This is home for me and I am planning to live here for many more years to come. I'm working as a Dental Assistant in Herndon, very convenient for me for its proximity. I love living at the Crescent Apartments, it's the most affordable housing in Reston and close to my work place, plus many of the residents have my way of living, meaning open to help one to another, talk to each other, a bonus you don't find anywhere else. I attend the Adams Center Friday prayer group at the Northern Virginia Hebrew Congregation around the corner from Crescent.

Herminda Belleza 12 year resident



My name is Herminda Belleza. I am of Philippine heritage and attend St. Thomas Beckett Catholic church near Crescent. I have lived in Crescent apartments over 12 years; this included three years prior to my daughter's birth and returning in 2004 when my marriage did not work out. As a single parent, we are on a very tight budget. I work seven days a week to raise the income needed to pay my rent, keep my car running, and buy health insurance for my daughter who has asthma.

As a single mother, raising my child by myself is very hard. We do not receive any outside support or assistance. We have to sacrifice many things to assure our ability to pay our rent. This is a matter of pride for me because my daughter is flourishing at her school. She just graduated from Forest Edge Elementary school with very good grades. She received a presidential award for outstanding academic achievement. She is very happy with her educational accomplishments.

During 5th grade, she was the youngest champion to win the Geography Bee at Forest Edge. She will be at Langston Hughes Middle School in the fall where she has been selected for the AVID Program (Advanced Individual Determination). This program is giving her confidence and opportunity to begin Middle School.

I am very worried about the Crescent Redevelopment Plan. If my family is forced to move from Crescent, this will disrupt my daughter's education plans. We have built our life at Crescent around good schools and closeness to my job. I would be unable to afford a more expensive apartment in Reston.

We have been blessed to live in a safe neighborhood. Moving would be very disruptive to our family. My daughter would feel the loss of all the recognition and relationships she has developed.

As a parent, our children's education is our number one priority for us. There is happiness when our children are comfortable and successful. If my child has to be removed from her school, she will be depressed and frightened about having to make such a significant change. This could have an impact on her grades and future.

I worked many years to get my green card and citizenship. We take pride in celebrating my family's achievements and the blessings we have received while living at the Crescent apartments.

Mercado-Flores Family, 7 year residents



Our Honduran family of four has built a life in Reston that is anchored by our value for strong education for our two children. For the last seven years we have lived at Crescent. Our family works, worships, and attends school in a supportive community that has been the answer to our prayers since coming to the United States. We are members of St. Thomas Beckett Catholic church in our neighborhood.

We lived at Fairways apartments and sent Jose to Lake Anne Elementary school to the Spanish Immersion Program. Jose has spent seven years at Lake Anne and is a recognized honor student. On June 17th, Jose graduated from Lake Anne. He was awarded the Obama Understanding Excellence award for being the strongest male student in the Spanish Immersion Program. For ten years the school has begun the morning saying the Pledge of Allegiance in English and Spanish as a method to lift up cultures and values.

Development forced us out of Fairways. We came to the Crescent apartments because it was the least expensive housing near Lake Anne School. It would have been less expensive for our family to move to Manassas, but we made a decision to stay in Reston. The rent at Crescent is about 40% of our family income. We struggle to meet our budget, but our goal is for Jose to attend college.

I (Karina -- mother) have been actively involved in the PTA and donate time to school events such as the annual Fiesta that lifts up the Latino culture. In 2012, Nicole started Kindergarten at Lake Anne and is following in her brother's footsteps.

I have taken advantage of the language programs located in the neighborhood to learn English. Our family enjoys the swimming pools and the children's programs offered at the library.

Vacations don't happen in our family, but in July we went to Myrtle Beach for a week. My husband has been working overtime to raise the money for this trip that was dedicated to Jose's strong academic achievement. "Jose you earned this vacation through your dedication to and hard work."

Octavia Robertson---6 year resident

I am a current resident of The Crescent Apartments. I have resided at the Crescents for over 6 years. When I first moved to the Crescents, I had completed my Bachelor's degree in Business, but I was still residing at my mother's home in Herndon. My salary was reasonable, but not enough for me to move out. I searched throughout Fairfax County; I placed my name on the Public Housing list, and the Housing Choice voucher list (known as Section 8). My name never came up for the Public housing list (income was too high), and by the time my name came up on the Housing Choice voucher list I was over income. As I was happy that I was in a position of being in a middle income level; I still was not able to find affordable housing in Fairfax County. As I did not want to move to far from my extended family and I had no vehicle at the time, moving to an area with little or no public transportation or to Loudoun County was not an option.

I was searching the web one day, and came across an apartment complex I had not heard of before; The Crescent Apartments. I called, made an appointment and within the next few weeks found myself in my new home. The most appealing factor about The Crescents was there affordability. With all utilities included, I was able to have a bit more room in my budget every month. The location was another factor, with its many trails to walk, the availability of several different bus routes in the area, and the Lake Anne plaza that supplies a quaint sense of community. Along with the proximity of the two elementary schools for which my son attended for a year and my daughter currently attends Forest Edge. As a parent, I have found the schools and community a welcoming environment for our African American family. As I have for the last 6 years lived and worked in Reston, the ease of being near if my children should need me, or if any type of personal situation arose; I was in a short distance to home, to work, and to their school. I know this is a very large factor for other tenants; for some, the Fairfax Connector is their only means of transportation; as was true for me at one time.

As a long-time resident of Fairfax County, Herndon and Reston, I have seen affordable housing disappear. The units maybe available, but the pool of those needing the housing is getting larger and larger, the waiting lists getting longer and longer and longer. There are some programs that have a three to five year waiting list. And if you are someone like me, in the middle, you have to find creative ways to make things work and move on. For the last two years, I have been moving on a plan to become a homeowner, but I will likely be unable to be a homeowner in Fairfax County, as it is becoming increasingly difficult (expensive) to buy a home in this county. It would be nice to know that I could return to the area I chose for my family to grow up in, to know that all who work in Fairfax County can live in Fairfax County as well.

Gina Laguna, 9 year resident



My name is Gina Laguna and I came to the United States from Peru with my two kids in the year 2000. We first lived in Boston, MA for two years, and then we moved to Reston, VA. We first lived in Fairway Apartments, then in Lake Anne, to then settle in Crescent Apartments where we have resided for the past nine years. The reason I decided to stay in this area is because I realized that there are great schools as my younger son could also continue to practice his Spanish studying in the Spanish Immersion Program at Lake Anne Elementary School. He then went on to study at Langston Hughes Middle School and South Lakes High School where he graduated in 2012. I love this area because it is very safe. The schools offer great academic courses that attract smart students. I also love the public transportation, public parks, and neighborhood trails to walk on. I am a widow so I am a single mother and this area has helped me raise my kids and pushing them to achieve great accomplishments. I live very close to my job and I always think how God has blessed me to come to Reston without knowing much about it, and now I have no desire to leave, as that will be such a negative change in my life and my kids' lives. Again, God has led me to this great city where I have moved three different times to ultimately find my Crescent home.

Aside from Lima, Peru, Reston will always be in my heart as I have great memories in this area where I have made great friends and my kids grew up in a great area. My younger son graduated high school with honors and an advanced diploma, and thanks to scholarships he received, he was able to attend Virginia Tech where he is on the Dean's List. This summer he is interning for Congress.

I am very worried about the future of Crescent Apartments, as Crescent has always been great for me especially due to my financial situation. I am a teacher for young toddlers and my income is not very high. Rent contributes to 39% of my annual income and these apartments are great for me. I do not know if I would be able to find an apartment that would fit my income.

Eman Mohamed & Alman Idris, 11 year residents

My husband (Alman Idris) and I are from Egypt. My husband has worked at Dulles Airport for 18 years for the same company and lived at the Crescent apartments for the past eleven years. Two years ago my children and I joined my husband, moving from Egypt to the Crescent apartments. Three of my four children (Hassan age 10, Samir age 8 and Zeinab age 5) attend Forest Edge School. Mohamed (age 1) is home with me.

Forest Edge has been very helpful to my children in adjusting to a new country. There has been strong support for my oldest daughter who is not yet able to speak. She is in special classes and we are hopeful that she will learn to talk. The school helps us understand her needs and the type of support she requires.

I am hoping to attend ESL classes to learn English and to learn to drive. These are big goals and it is not easy with four children. We are thankful for the life we are living at the Crescent apartments and the sense of community I have found with other women friends at Crescent, sharing childcare and transportation. We attend the Friday Prayer Service in our neighborhood.

Juan Guevara, 6 year resident



My name is Juan Guevara and I'm from El Salvador.

I came to this country in March, 1999. First I lived in Los Angeles but after moving from one place to another I finally came to Reston and I have lived at the Crescent apartments for six years.

I'm a single father with a daughter who is 10 years old and will be in 5th grade next year. She attends

Lake Anne Elementary School.

I wish to continue living here for many more years for many reasons:

- a) It's affordable for me, because I work in construction and sometimes work is not constant.
- b) It's close to my daughter's school.
- c) It's close to the places I have to go for work.

My daughter and I have built many friendships with other Crescent families. Mrs. Flores picks my daughter up for the bus every morning since I have to leave for work. My daughter sings in the choir at St. Joseph's Catholic Church. We are a blessed family.

Maria Rivera, 4 year resident



My name is Maria Rivera; I came to the United States when I was 15 years old from Guatemala, Some of my family had already come to this Country. I rented a room and got a job very soon after arriving. A few years later I got married and had three daughters. I now have four grandchildren who live close to the Crescent apartments and one grandchild attends Forest Edge School just like their mothers did several years ago.

I work for Fairfax County as a bus attendant and make \$18,000 per year. My husband works in landscaping during the warmer months and I also clean houses to make a combined income of about \$30,000. We pay about half our income in rent and have lived at the Crescent apartments for four years. We love this area and it is close to our work, my daughters and grandchildren. My husband is able to use a bicycle to get to work so we don't need two cars. Each season I decorate my front door for Easter, St. Patrick's Day, Christmas, and Thanksgiving. This has been a

welcoming community and the schools have benefited my daughters and grandchild. We attend St. John Neumann Catholic church.

Quintanilla Family, 7 year residents



Denis and Silvia Quintanilla are from El Salvador, have lived at Crescent for 7 years with their two children, Denis, age 11 and Ana Maria, age 6. Denis works in Herndon in trash collection. He also has a second job in landscaping. The family attends St. John Neumann Catholic church in Reston and the children are in religious education at St. Thomas Beckett parish.

Silvia was a teacher in El Salvador and was sent to a rural community to launch the first school system in that area. She has used these same skills in volunteering at Lake Anne Elementary school where her children attend the Spanish Immersion program. The Crescent apartments are out of boundary for Lake Anne School and for five years, she walked her children to and from school. Last year she lobbied for a school bus to bring Crescent students to and from school, benefitting many families and allowing more flexibility, especially for mothers seeking to find jobs. The family are avid soccer fans. Denis is a soccer wiz and on a travel team.