From homeless to birthday homeowner

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JUPITER — Dawn Marie Turner, a former foster child who now works for a child welfare organization in Palm Beach Gardens, celebrated a major personal milestone by breaking ground on her new Habitat for Humanity home as part of her 26th birthday celebration.

Turner, a resident of Villages of Hope, a support community for emancipated foster youth, is also an employee of Place of Hope, which serves area foster children.

She is part of the direct care staff at Joann's Cottage for pregnant and/or young mothers and the Seven Stars Emergency Shelter for boys removed from urgent situations, both of which are Place of Hope programs.

Turner's path brought her to Villages of Hope after she became homeless, following a childhood traumatized with abuse and neglect. Her mother suffered from drug and alcohol abuse, which left her lost, angry and fearful.

Turner changed her life with the help of a surrogate mother and then Villages of Hope.

On her April 17th birthday, Turner was recognized for her effort to earn homeownership, which included volunteering and being employed. The Breakers Hotel, Palm Beach, sponsored Turner's home, which sped up the construction by several months.

The event featured comments by Turner, a representative of Habitat for Humanity and The Breakers, along with a blessing of the ground and a groundbreaking with ceremonial shovels. The new homes are part of Kennedy Estates of Jupiter, which is under construction.