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A Resident Perspective: Kiara Hedglin, Arboleda Apartments

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Pride, privacy, and peace of mind ? these are the three things that keep going through my mind as I start to type this as I relax in my very first apartment. My name is Kiara Hedglin, I am 26 years old, have a developmental disability called Cerebral Palsy, and am a (new) proud resident of Arboleda in Walnut Creek California. Like many people with significant physical disabilities that use a wheelchair, I experience challenges on a daily basis that most people never have to worry about; but I have made it a point not to let anything hold me back and my recent move is already empowering me to dream bigger! Until recently, as a person on an

extremely fixed income, I have had to live in a shared housing situation with many roommates at a very high cost. In fact, almost 80% of my overall income was spent on renting a single room. That didn't leave too much left for food, fashion, fun... really anything. The result of this was that I had to put my life and dreams on hold month after month, year after year just to keep a roof over my head. With the assistance I have received through SAHA and HOME the cost of my apartment (Yes, my apartment) is actually in line with my income. I have food in my fridge, am able to buy clothes I like, and can even go out every once in a while with friends. Basically, I feel like I am already starting to live a more normal life instead of just barely squeaking by.

Money aside, I can't even begin to describe what it feels like to finally hold the key to my own life! It is up to me who comes in, who leaves where I go and what I do. I can bake, clean, quilt, cook, and study on my own time ? yes, I have already re-enrolled in college to finish my BA! For those without the daily challenges of a disability these rights of passage usually come from just reaching a certain age. For me it all started on moving day, when I got the key to my front door, the ability to truly control my day to day life. Ultimately, in getting my very first apartment I feel like I didn't just open the door to my home and roll in to my living room.

I feel like I have finally rolled into adulthood.

Kiara Hedglin Arboleda Walnut Creek, Ca

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