

# Mike and Julius Alston

by [Jonathan Young](#) on 12/11/16 in [General](#), [Highlight](#), [Member Story](#), [Story](#)



Meet the dream team! **Julius and Mike Alston** are brothers who for the first time in their lives have their very own home.

The Alston brothers are a beloved duo, Julius as the honorary Poet Laureate of CEF and Mike as a reliable friend and jokester. Both connected with CEF Advocates while living in the shelter. “Now we all got started from IFC. They fed us, they clothed us, they sheltered us. It all got started from there. But if you go there, you’re going to CEF, they’re going to tell you that,” says Julius.

Both Mike and Julius got involved in CEF within two weeks of the time they each moved into the shelter, jumping feet first into all of our programs. Since joining CEF, *Mike has attended 80 sessions of our Opportunity Classes* and *Julius has attended 64*, earning the coveted accolade as “Alumni Ambassadors” for their over-the-top attendance and achievements through the class (only 8 classes are required for graduation!). Meanwhile, Mike and Julius have both **met with Advocates over 200 times each!** And wow, has their engagement ever paid off...



Before joining CEF Mike was unemployed for about 5 years after a layoff shortly into the Great Recession. He and his two Advocates, Matt and Hannah, submitted dozens of resumes and applications. Mike is dependable, easy-going, and kind, and was overwhelmingly perseverant throughout his job search. When Hannah spotted a new restaurant opening in Carrboro with a “Now Hiring” sign, she alerted Mike and he and Matt filled out the application immediately. Mike says, “I was the first one there when they first opened.” He



got a full-time position in the new, growing restaurant! Still doing well there almost a year later, Mike shares, “CEF did a lot for me, because if it hadn’t been for CEF I wouldn’t have that job up there.”



Meanwhile, Julius is the older brother of the two, and retired a couple of years ago. He worked with his Advocates, Steven and Leah, to search for affordable housing. When the Housing Choice Voucher waiting list opened up for just 3 days in Orange County, Julius submitted an application, and several months later he was actually selected for a voucher! His Advocates helped him to pull together all of the necessary paperwork to receive the voucher alongside Rapid Rehousing assistance for his security deposit. Since Julius and Mike wanted to live together as well, the team worked to add Mike officially to Julius’ voucher.

Then the search really began for a landlord willing to accept their housing voucher. Advocates assisted Julius and Mike in applying for rentals that would keep Mike within bus or walking distance from his job. Over and over, this amazing duo was turned down simply because so many landlords in our community do not accept housing vouchers. Ultimately however, this whole team coordinated with several partners to find a stable home for the brothers. The Jackson Center and Self-Help Credit Union had recently acquired a duplex through all of their efforts with the Northside Neighborhood Initiative, perfectly located for Mike's job, and were thrilled to rent to the Alston brothers.

In their new home together, Julius cooks every day since Mike works most days. Last we heard, what was on the menu? "Beef roast and creamed potatoes and pinto beans last night, tonight I'll probably cook chicken and a pinto bean salad. Every morning we have bacon and eggs, or sausage and eggs." Julius and Mike are definitely making their house a home. Julius even wrote a poem about their move out of the shelter into their home. [Read it here!](#)

Both brothers continue to set and reach goals. Julius saved throughout his time at the shelter to prepare to move into housing and continues to reach his monthly savings goal with CEF even now that he has bills to manage. Julius has achieved 5 ambitious savings goals with his CEF Account! And since getting his job, Mike has made a deposit into his CEF Safe Savings Account literally every week — sometimes twice a week! Their advocates are working with them on their next big goals, including better health, getting a scooter, building credit, getting a GED for Mike and getting a part-time job for Julius. Given their success so far, we're sure they'll reach these next goals just the same!





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