Pamela Clark had been a life long resident of New Orleans before Katrina hit in 2005. While many residents stayed until the last minute, if they left at all, Pamela always evacuated. That August, the nearest hotel room she could find was in Dallas, Texas. She and her son left New Orleans and the home they had lived in for the past six years with a few changes of clothes and the expectation of being home within the week.

As they watched the devastation of Katrina on their hotel room’s TV, Pamela and her son quickly realized that they would not be returning home any time soon. Pamela recalls being, “so angry with the city and not being protected.” The mother and son bounced around hotel rooms in Dallas for 6 weeks before moving semi-permanently to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Pamela remembers clearly the 45-minute drive she had to take every time she needed to meet her home insurance company. After two years, the Clarks finally moved back to New Orleans, but not home. They started renting a one-bedroom apartment that they have been sharing while waiting for Pamela’s home to be habitable again.

Pamela’s long wait is due to pipes beneath the house that have become separated. In order to reach them, a contractor needed to dig tunnels under the house. While below, they discovered that the pipes had become separated because they lay flat, instead of slanting down, allowing water to settle in them. The house would now need to be raised as well. Pamela has been able to get some of the work started, but like many residents returning post-Katrina has encountered considerable roadblocks.

Because she had worked since she was 16 years old, Pamela is upset that since the storm she has, at times, had trouble finding work. Having supported herself for years, it was difficult to reach out for help. When she finally did, it was even more demoralizing that the first two organizations she contacted ran out of money before being able to help her. Eventually, she was referred to St. Bernard Project. Though she maintains the attitude of a homeowner who has been let down in the past, Pamela remains hopeful. She is now back at work and excited at the idea of returning to her home. When asked what about being back in her home would be most exciting, Pamela simply says, "I’m looking forward to spending Christmas at home."