

# Methuen family fights to stave off foreclosure

By J.J. Huggins [jhuggins@eagletribune.com](mailto:jhuggins@eagletribune.com) Sep 30, 2010



CARL RUSSO/Staff photo Danny Nunez's home in Methuen is being foreclosed on by Wells Fargo. Danny stands in front of his home with his daughters, Daniela, 2 and Danelys, 11. Staff Photographer

METHUEN — Danny Nunez's wife cooked an aromatic meal of beans and plantains, while their three daughters milled around the house last night.

The pleasant domestic setting masks the gloomy situation the family finds itself in. Like a growing number of struggling homeowners around the country, they have been foreclosed upon.

"We're a family. We're here because we love this town, we love this school system," said Danny Nunez, 31.

"We're worried about our children's future," said Nunez's wife, Iluminada, who works for a temp agency packing yogurt.

Foreclosures across the Merrimack Valley and the country continued to rise last month. Since August 2009, Methuen has seen a 75 percent increase in foreclosures, from four to seven last month.

In Haverhill, foreclosure deeds — which signify that a house has been sold or auctioned due to a distressed sale — increased 144 percent, from nine in August 2009 to 22 last month. In Lawrence, they increased 133 percent, from 12 in August 2009 to 28 last month. And in both Andover and North Andover, the number went from none in August of last year to four last month.

Nunez said his sister-in-law went through a foreclosure in Lawrence a month ago. "All these foreclosures are damaging, not only our families but also our local government and our churches," said Pastor Victor Jarvis of Ebenezer Christian Church in Lawrence, where Nunez is a parishioner.

Nunez bought the home at 22 Larchwood Road in 2003 for \$267,000. He was working as a lead technician in the HVAC field. Things turned sour when his hours were cut, leading him to take a lower-paying job as a school bus driver.

He fell behind on the monthly mortgage payments of more than \$2,000.

The lender, Wells Fargo, foreclosed at 10 a.m. Sept. 20, but the family is still living in the house and Nunez said they have not been given a deadline to vacate. In fact, they still hope to work out a deal to avoid leaving.

City assessment records show that Nunez bought his home in April 2003 for \$267,000. His property value rose to \$306,800 two years ago before plummeting to \$225,400 this year.

The only sustainable solution is for Wells Fargo to grant Nunez a new 30-year, fixed rate, low-interest mortgage based on the current value of the home, said Lisa Vinikoor, lead organizer for Merrimack Valley Project, a group of faith, labor, and community leaders helping Nunez and others in his position.

"We worked with the Nunez family for more than a year in an effort to find an option that would allow them to keep their home," said Tom Goyda, vice president of communications for Wells Fargo Home Mortgage. "Unfortunately, none of those options worked out."

However, Goyda said the bank will continue to look into the situation.

"We have reached out to the borrowers again today and we will be discussing the situation with them and we'll likely have more that we can say at some point after those conversations are concluded," he said.

Members of the Merrimack Valley Project and Ebenezer Christian Church plan to hold a vigil at noon today at Nunez's home to show support for the family.