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- JULIA VIVANCO, ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

Housing and Homeless Services

A Spiritual Retreat: Women thriving with healing and hope

For a special two-day retreat, more than 110 beneficiaries of the various programs of the Housing and Homeless Services Division sang and prayed together as they renewed their relationship with God and themselves.

Malvern Retreat House generously hosted this important annual event, now in its fifth year. Facing challenges from homelessness, addiction and mental illness, this retreat is a crucial part of healing for the women.

“To be able to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is so important in their journey. We can give them all the food in the world and all the housing and all the social services, but this is what really helps them with their success.”

- AMY STONER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES AND HOMELESS DIVISIONS
ABOVE AND BEYOND: More than just a job

Late in the day at St. Francis & St. Vincent Homes (SF&SV), Mike, a medical technician, noticed that a resident was complaining of a stomachache. Though Mike was about to leave for the day, something was pulling him to stay and address Elijah's upset stomach. Perhaps it was not just a typical stomachache.

After talking to Elijah, Mike realized he needed to take action. Elijah was rushed to the Emergency Room where he was quickly diagnosed with appendicitis.

Elijah's family couldn't be contacted and he was extremely scared and in serious pain. Though the workday was far past over, Mike knew he needed to be there for Elijah. Mike stayed overnight, sleeping in a chair in the hospital room. He reassured Elijah that he was there for him. After all, in that moment, he was the closest thing to family.

The next morning, Elijah had a successful surgery and made a full recovery. Elijah was grateful to have Mike with him every step of the way. Just imagine being 11-years-old, alone in a hospital room, in pain and unable to contact your family.

It may seem like Mike went above and beyond, but for any of the staff members at SF&SV, it's just what they do. They treat each of the residents like family and they would do anything for them. This is just one reason why SF&SV is so special.

What we hear so regularly from staff members is how appreciative they are for YOUR support. They realize that though you've never met Elijah, you still support him as though you have. We share these stories because we want you to know the difference your generosity makes, not just to dedicated staff members, but to each beneficiary, like Elijah.

- MARY BETH, ST. FRANCIS & ST. VINCENT HOMES NURSE

LOOKING FOR A NEW PLACE TO CALL HOME:

Welcoming our brothers and sisters seeking a safe haven

Apolina is a single Congalese mother who came to America with her two teenage sons. She and her sons fled the conflict from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

From welcoming them at the airport, to learning transportation routes, to enrolling the kids in school, their CSS case manager was there. CSS staff stood alongside them as they went to their first medical check-ups and as Apolina looked for employment. We do this to enable them to take charge of their responsibilities and live out the American dream. We do this because they are our neighbors coming to us from war, famine and poverty.

Their first day in America seemed to have been one of the greatest moments in their lives.

- WALKY JOSEPH, CSS CASE MANAGER

CELEBRATING EDUCATION: Far beyond a photo opportunity

Though preschool graduation is adorable, it has much more value than adding a few cute snapshots to the camera roll. With the current curriculum, preschool is much more than a babysitting service. It ensures that children won't fall behind when they head to kindergarten. Located in the Hunting Park section of Philadelphia, Casa serves many in need. We believe every child should be set up for a future of success!

I feel like he's more prepared now to go to kindergarten. Before, he was behind. After Casa, he knows his colors and his numbers.

- VALERIE ORTEGA, CASA DEL CARMEN PARENT

FROM CRACK TO CALCULUS: A former student triumphs as a teacher

Quamiir was arrested at 15-years-old for dealing crack. He was sent to St. Gabriel’s Hall, a residential treatment program for at-risk youth. This summer, Quamiir returned to St. Gabe’s. This time, however, he came as a state-certified educator.

Reminiscing on his time at St. Gabe’s, Quamiir recalls feeling at ease when his feet first hit the ground. He knew he was in a good place. Through the many ups and downs of his teen years, the staff at St. Gabe’s were there for him. When his best friend was murdered, when he struggled with addiction, and when he experienced family conflict, each time he turned to his family at St. Gabe’s. Now, he’s giving back to the place that taught him so much.

Quamiir grew into a tremendous young man. He has met with President Obama several times and his strong credentials led him to be heavily recruited by school districts and graduate schools throughout the country. The choice was easy for Quamiir as he returned to St. Gabe’s as a teacher, truly living out their motto: Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve.

I came to the conclusion that I don’t teach for my students any more – I teach for God. I don’t feel like I’m doing any of this on my own. It feels like a movie script, and God is writing this story to give himself the glory.

- QUAMIIR TRICE, FORMER ST. GABE’S STUDENT/CURRENT TEACHER
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