

Ending the Crisis of Family Homelessness

from the Executive Director
Margaret A. Leonard, LSA

Project Hope is a neighborhood based organization that cares about families by weaving a web of supports around parents and their children. The supportive community we strive for includes shelter for families without homes, affordable housing, quality child care, capacity building through an adult learning center, scholarships for higher education, and transition to work supports to help families get access to jobs that pay a living wage.

Collaboration

Project Hope expands the boundaries of neighborhood and community through partnerships and collaborations that stretch our dreams and make them real for all families.

One such collaboration is sponsored by the Paul & Phyllis

Fireman Charitable Foundation called the **“One Family Campaign: Ending Family Homelessness in the Commonwealth by 2005”**. The Campaign seeks to shift the focus from *managing* to *ending* the crisis of family homelessness. It identifies solutions that will lead to these outcomes:

- Every family in the state will have a home;
- Every family will have access to the necessary supports to survive and thrive;
- Every family will have access to opportunities that will allow them to be economically secure and to become tax payers.

Support for this campaign moves far beyond the Foundation, and the 12 not for profit organizations like Project Hope for whom this work is our life blood. All five democratic candidates have

endorsed this campaign. We are currently having positive conversations with the Mitt Romney Campaign. Several prominent business leaders have endorsed it and these numbers are growing.

Action

The advancement of this campaign is of major importance to Project Hope. **I encourage you to get a copy of this campaign document, to endorse it and to encourage your friends and associates to join you.**

You may get a copy of this by calling the Fireman Charitable Foundation at: **617-630-4995**. They will send you a report and keep you updated on our efforts to plan to effectively and efficiently make this happen. Your response will help us make a difference for a larger number of families.

Thank you! ■



14th Annual Homecoming

At Project Hope we keep in touch with former residents' families, staff, and friends with an August picnic. Face paint, clowns, balloons, good food and good friends are the recipe for success.

Volunteer Thanks



Volunteer Recognition Luncheon: Dawn Alderman (foreground) a current member of our Marketing Committee received a certificate of appreciation from Sr. Janice Waters, Volunteer Coordinator, and Alfredo Ribot, Shelter/Housing Coordinator for her help with holiday donations.

The term “volunteer” is actually derived from the garden. A volunteer seedling is a plant that comes up and takes root on its own without any coaxing, prodding or effort from human hands. How very appropriate then, that the term “volunteer” could describe some of Project Hope’s most dependable friends.

During National Volunteer Appreciation Week, we celebrated some of the outstanding volunteers who have taken the initiative to plant their own seeds at Project Hope to make our work such a success.

Many thanks to the following committee members who work behind-the scenes to make Project Hope a better organization for families in need.

Friends Committee
Kathleen Henry, Chair
Todd Fry
Nancy Gilarde
Susan Schrader

Marketing Committee
Jennifer Reck, Chair
Dawn Alderman
Adelene Perkins

We are Online

Have you ever visited us online? Our website is a great place to access volunteer opportunities, learn the latest in program information, view our recent publications and make donations to us by credit card. Come, visit us at www.prohope.org.

Volunteer Opportunities

Pick Up and Delivery

Many people call us to donate miscellaneous, good quality items that we can use. Unfortunately, many of these donors do not have the ability to deliver their donations to our agency.

As such, we miss out on many wonderful gifts. Could you and your friends volunteer once a month to do the heavy lifting? Do you have the



muscle and the wheels to pick up and deliver? If so, please call Sr. Janice at 617-442-1880 x21.

Marketing Committee

Do you have marketing or public relations skills? Are you interested in being part of a committee interested in taking Project Hope’s publications to the next level? If so, please consider joining our committee which meets once a month on a weekday evening.

Friends Committee

Do you love events? Are you a people person? The Friends Committee is a great way to combine your people and event planning skills for a good cause. Project Hope events include tours, celebrations, and fundraisers.

Please call Sarah at 617-442-1880 x13 if you would like to join in the fun of the Marketing or Friends Committees.

Children's Center

Celebrates Success before Six

On a recent summer afternoon, eight pre-school graduates, each wearing a white mortar board with a red tassel, took their seats with quiet grace in the shade of the blue and white tent on the lawn of Project Hope.

Parents, teachers and friends applauded and cheered as these children proved their readiness for kindergarten in song and verse. Songs in French, Spanish, German, English and Swahili followed by a poem about a pumpkin, all performed from memory and with precise gestures, delighted the audience.

Each graduate, when called by name, stepped forward to receive the first of many testimonials of education. This time the presentation also included a new knapsack filled with "essential tools" for kindergarten. This double demand presented a first challenge to

graduates: how to hold the certificate in "display mode" (two hands and against chest) and receive the knapsack nearly as heavy as oneself without assistance.

Aha! Parents to the rescue! Nolan of the sparkling eyes, firmly grasping his certificate, stole the show. His high pitched voice echoed in delight, "Daddy" as he saw his proud Dad approach to claim the knapsack and kiss the graduate. Not the kiss, the applause and laughter of the audience nor the pressure of the limelight distracted this 5 year old graduate from his firm hold on the certificate. May his tenacity and pride accompany him on the road to life-long learning and inspire all who celebrated the achievement of these children. ■



Pictured here beaming with pride at the Children's Center graduation exercises are (1-r) Brittany, Nicole, Shamia; (2nd row) Jordana, Nolan; (3rd row) teachers Hope Eason and Maria Peguero. Not pictured are Eugenio, Laki, and Enicely.

Parents Gain Insight into Child Development Issues

To improve understanding about child development issues, the Children's Center recently offered three workshops on topics requested by parents.

Candelaria Silva presented the interactive workshops on *Positive Discipline Strategies, Understanding Toddlers and Preschoolers, and Making Parent/Teacher Conferences Work*. Dinner and child care were provided during the sessions, which made it possible for 75% of the parents to attend.

As a result of these meetings parents have bonded more deeply with their children and also with the teachers at Project Hope.

Lori Thames, the Center's Director, is grateful to the City of Boston for their *Quality Improvement Grant* which helped fund these rewarding meetings. ■

Community News

is now a
semi-annual publication
of Project Hope.

Editor: Patricia Curran, SND
617-442-2054

Our labels have been generated from a new database. We apologize for any errors that might have occurred and ask you to send us corrections. As always we welcome your comments and suggestions.

Adult Learner Report

from the Director

Patricia Hembrough

Many of the women in the Adult Learners Program tell us that living in shelters can be a lonely, isolating experience that destroys one's self-esteem. The Adult Learner Program at Project Hope has proven to be a safe, nurturing gathering for these women. They have formed good friendships, have been a tremendous support for each other and they continue to enrich and transform their lives.

Program Features

■ The Adult Learner Program (ALP) continues to integrate technology into the curriculum through special projects and assignments. In addition to basic word processing software, students learn PowerPoint, Photoshop, scanning and digital technology.

■ In response to our students' request, next year our program will run a half hour longer each day so we can build in a quiet study period. This will give the women an opportunity to do homework, study for tests, and read while having the staff on hand to answer questions.

Accomplishments

■ As part of an attendance incentive program, a donated MacIntosh computer was given to Lyva Ambers, the student with the highest attendance rate. The computer will be an effective educational tool for her in college classes.

■ Using their acquired computer skills, the women in the ALP compiled their personal writings—poems, life stories, mission statements, essays, into a book, *Transforming Women of Project Hope*.

■ We anticipate that five of the women will be receiving their GED degree over the summer months. Graduation will be in September.

Our students's book, *Transforming Women*, has been sent to interested community agencies, funders and friends of Project Hope. If you would like a copy, please call Patricia Hembrough at 617-442-1880, ext. 19.

ALP Teacher Provides Cultural Enrichment

Anna began playing the violin at age 3 and at age 9 was playing weekly with her father at their church in Florida.

The violin shown here was made especially for her in a year long process begun in 1990 in New York. A copy of a Guarneri "del Jesu", its tone improves with age.

When Anna's father, Bienvenido, came to visit his daughter, they had the pleasure of performing in public here at Project Hope in the Adult Learner Program, at St. Margaret's church, and in concert in Anna's home. ■

Anna Yangco, violinist and Adult Learner teacher, was joined by her father, Bienvenido Yangco, a clarinetist and physician, to play "Concerto in D Minor" by Bach for our families and staff. Exposure to different types of music is integral to the ALP program.



A Very Good Year



Lyva Ambers

Life has turned around for Lyva Ambers. Walking by Project Hope two years ago, Lyva read the sign that listed Adult Education as a program and walked in to register for classes so she could get her GED. Now the GED is behind her; ahead is a whole new future. Lyva has been chosen to be a *One Family Scholar*: Full tuition to the University of Massachusetts will be paid by the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Foundation.

My Roles in Life

by **Halima Abdullah**

excerpted from the ALP student publication

Transforming Women of Project Hope



The most important class for Lyva at Project Hope was called “*Loves Herself Regardless*” as taught by Char Caver. In that class she learned Serenity. Until that class, “I had never been comfortable just sitting with myself and listening to what was inside,” she said.

Lyva’s Mother had died when she was two and her Father, an alcoholic, died when she was a teen. She herself got lost for a while; made some bad decisions; but she never lost faith in God. Her two spiritual communities, Project Hope and the Southern Baptist church have helped her find a new path.

In my life I play many roles. I am a parent, student, and also a resident in a shelter. Being a parent has been the best thing that has ever happened to me. My daughter, Mahogany, has given me so much in the last two years. She has taught me patience and what it means to be a parent. Mahogany and I have so much fun together. I read to her, we play, dance and have lots of laughs together. She makes me want to be a better parent and a provider.

From the shelter I was able to learn what is important to me. I

We are happy to report that since this story was written, Halima received her rental subsidy and located an apartment where she and Mahogany now reside.



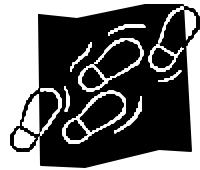
The excitement in her voice is infectious when Lyva says, “It has been a very good year. I got my twin girls back, I’m engaged, I have a good job as an assistant Youth Coordinator at the Strand Theatre. I’m going to U. Mass. to get a certificate as an addiction specialist and then I’m going to get a degree in Family Counseling in 36 months!

I want to be a Counsellor because there are so many young people out there that have trouble in their families, and I want to help them.”

Project Hope is proud to have been a part of Lyva’s awakening to her personal, academic, and leadership potential. ■

realized I needed to go back to school to earn my GED so I could get a better paying job.

Being in school has helped me deal with the stress in my life. When I am in school, I feel good that I am doing something to better myself. In school, we have a class called “*Loves Herself Regardless*”. It is about self-empowerment and learning to love and respect ourselves. The teachers and the classes have taught me a few things about myself. Now I know that I am special and I can make it under these harsh conditions... ■



Walk for HOPE

by Anna Yangco

Anna Yangco is a graduate student at UMASS Boston and a teacher in the Adult Learner Program.

During the Spring 2002 semester at the University of Massachusetts – Boston, seven graduate students and I enrolled in a Group Dynamics course. On the first day of class, the professor informed us that it was entirely our decision to coordinate the format of the class project. After a few weeks of brain-storming sessions, discussions, and friendly debates, the class came to a consensus to have the “Walk for HOPE,” a fundraiser for the Project HOPE Adult Learner Program (ALP). The class was impressed with the courage of the women in the ALP and our mission, so they found the fundraiser a worthwhile endeavor.

Once our hearts were set on the Walk, each

student’s talent seemed to shine. Anne Spencer, a graphic designer, created the logo for the T-shirts. Helen McCrosky, an



On May 4, 2002, nine graduate students at University of Massachusetts “Walked for HOPE” along the 14 mile Cape Cod canal, donating a total of \$1600 to our Adult Learner Program. We are grateful for their initiative.

early childhood education specialist and poet, composed a beautiful poem entitled, “Lost in the Ink,” a powerful work about the value of education.

Our diligent team spent the remaining weeks confirming the location, printing the T-shirts, printing brochures and flyers, soliciting donations and planning our picnic celebration after the walk.

The Group Dynamic class raised a total of \$1600, which will be used to fund special projects or field trips, which the women of the ALP will choose.

The Project HOPE Adult Learner Program staff and students would like to thank our donors and our walkers (Anne Spencer, Kim Maslowski, Seira Shalton, Donna Papapietro, Paul Maguire, Helen McCrosky, Barbara Anderson, and Professor Canice McGarry) for offering their kindness, talent, and dedication to support our program. ■



Sharing Hope Tours

Are you interested in visiting Project Hope? Have you ever had a chance to see us in action? Would you like the opportunity to get to know us better? If so, come and join us for a tour. Sharing Hope Tours take place each month. The next dates are Thursday, September 19th and Tuesday, October 17th from 9:30-10:30 A.M.

The program include guest speakers from our programs, information on our history and goals, and a tour of the facility.

If you would like to attend, please contact Sarah at 617-442-1880 x13.

Multi-talented Kathleen Henry, Chair of the Friends Committee, enjoys a cup of coffee and a bite of her own home-made apple cinnamon cake at the debriefing following the first Sharing Hope Tour.

Project Hope Helps to **STOP** the Eviction



We all love living in this city of Boston but, sadly, many low-income or fixed income families can not meet escalating rents. Homelessness is on the rise and there is no more room in the shelters.

Project Hope has responded to this crisis by expanding its housing search program to include a *homelessness prevention* component. It all began when former residents, staff members, or others who knew of our expertise in finding housing for our shelter families, turned to us when friends on fixed income or elderly parents were in danger of being evicted for inability to pay rent.

Our Housing Coordinator and Shelter Director, Alfredo Ribot, responded to the panic-stricken referrals from the local community with all the resources at his disposal. Chief among these was



Alfredo Ribot, our Housing Coordinator, dealt with over 700 housing related problems last year. The majority of these came from tenants in the local community who were in danger of being evicted.

his own expertise honed from 35 years of dealing with similar issues in tenant organizations, in agencies serving the homeless, as a former property manager and current property owner. That experience taught him the desirability of bringing all sides together to settle disputes, preferably before they end up in court. He has forged a well-regarded stabilization plan. It is built on collaboration, on tapping state and community resources, and on our reputation for doing what we promise.

Housing Stabilization Plan

Sometimes stabilization is a matter of our contacting another non-profit agency like *Family to Family* and verifying the facts of the case so they can offer appropriate financial assistance. Sometimes we locate a new income stream, as has happened for four sets of grandparents caring for their grandchildren. (There are special rental subsidies available to this growing category of family, once we help verify custody.) At other times we need to teach new budgeting skills to families, to guide them through the process to reestablish credit, or to personally guarantee the arrival of a monthly check to the landlord. If there is a problem we cannot resolve, we will remove an inappropriate tenant and relocate that family. Being known and trusted is the foundation of our success.

Over the last four years at Project Hope no family that has moved out from shelter into affordable housing has fallen back into homelessness.

Instead of a *win-lose* scenario in the courtroom, we try to negotiate a *win-win* to break the cycle of homelessness. We are committed to the labor that creates systems that truly serve families. ■

One Family Scholars Need Mentors

If you understand the struggles that women face as they return to school - like the difficulty of balancing family responsibilities and economic constraints - and want to help make a difference in someone's life, you would make a wonderful mentor for our One Family Campaign Scholars.

We need volunteer mentors who can commit to 3 hours per month to support low-income women in their journey to further their education, build their career skills and develop leadership potential. Our next training for mentors will be held in Peabody on Saturday, September 7, 2002. If you *might be* interested in volunteering, **please call Yolande at 617-442-2843.** Thank you.

Good News

The Dancing Deer Baking Company which won the Fleet Small Business Leadership Award in July 2002, received **\$10,000** to give to the charity of its choice. That money will go the *One Family Campaign*, a collaboration to which Project Hope belongs.

Through *Dancing Deer*, profits from the sale of house shaped cookies and other gift items go directly to help homeless families in many shelters get jobs and move into apartments of their own.

To order delicious gifts in artful packaging, go to www.dancingdeer.com/sweethome or call 1-888-699-3337.



Children from families connected to Project Hope contributed to this display at the award ceremony. Their own frosted gingerbread cookies are attached to this house.



Project Hope provides shelter, education and job training to families and connects them to other resources to empower them to rise up and out of poverty.

Within its walls and throughout the community, Project Hope serves as a friend and advocate for families seeking support and economic self-sufficiency.

Alone and in collaboration with others, Project Hope challenges those systems that perpetuate family poverty.

PROJECT HOPE
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