

'The Cov'



Covenant House

Opening Doors for Homeless Youth

Message from the Executive Director

Dear CHPA's Friends and Supporters,

The summer is winding down and I hope that each of you was able to escape the heat in your own ways. When it is oppressively hot in the summer, I can't help but think of our kids, especially the ones who have not yet found their way into Covenant House. I am certainly thankful for the ability to get out of the heat, and I am even more thankful that Covenant House can be a place of rest and reprieve for young people looking to find their way off of the street.

The end of summer also means the beginning of school, which can be a challenging time for our young people, many of whom have not completed their education. Most of these kids have been discarded by the education system and often are not looking to return. One of the most important aspects of our program revolves around our efforts in Education and Vocation. Each summer we hold a graduation party for all of your youth who

have graduated. This can be a graduate of high school, a graduate of a trade school, and even graduates from college. The entire Crisis Center gathers to celebrate the accomplishments of their peers. This June, we celebrated the graduation of 23 young people, including a few from college!

Since I last wrote, we have made incredible progress on our new Rights of Passage facility in Kensington, set to open in early 2011. The old structures are gone, the site is excavated, and foundation walls are being put up! The prayers and support we have received has been incredible and we push on through construction. I just can't wait to have an actual structure that I can show you, and I am even more excited to open those doors! While the capital side of this project is moving along, I have to ask you to consider your ability to continue to support our efforts with Rights of Passage as we raise the money necessary to keep those doors open. We continue to need your help.

I am excited about the end of summer. The changing of the seasons always brings something new and I have faith

that this newness is going to be extremely positive. As always, I want to invite you to come and visit us. Set up a time to come to our shelter and see what we are accomplishing firsthand. You will certainly be inspired by what you see. Feel free to reach out to our Director of Development, Zachary D. Wood at 215-951-5411 or zwood@covenanthousepa.org, to set up a day and time.

Thank you so very much for all of your continued support.

Cordella Hill,
Executive Director



Covenant House Resident

Covenant House Pennsylvania and P.A.W.S.

Last February, three University of Pennsylvania students who volunteered at Covenant House, brought some of our youth to the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society (P.A.W.S.) for a class project. Immediately, there was a connection between the animals and the young adults of Covenant House. Since the first visit in February, five to seven youth have consistently been volunteering at P.A.W.S. twice a month. While there, Cov kids help clean out the cages, feed the animals and provide the human contact – the *unconditional love* and

absolute respect, values that they have learned at Covenant House - that many of the abandon animals are in need of like our kids. One youth in particular has been so drawn to the animals, she has started interning at P.A.W.S. and is now thinking about a career in the field of veterinary medicine. The volunteer hours at P.A.W.S. is a part of the organization wide effort called "Cov Cares," where each youth picks their own organization to volunteer at with a goal of 1,000 hours by the end of the year.

Rights of Passage Campaign Update

This summer has been wildly exciting for our efforts to develop a new facility for our Rights of Passage program. On June 23, we officially broke ground at the construction site, and since then the project has been underway. Although we are learning first-hand how construction projects can sometimes bring unforeseen hiccups, we continue to be full-steam ahead on this project which much anticipation and excitement. As you read this, foundation walls for the new ROP facility are being erected. Our city has a dire need for transitional housing beds for homeless young adults, so we are very aware of the gravity of this development, not just for our agency, but for young people in need all over the Philadelphia region. The addition of these 20 transitional beds triples our capacity to serve these kids.

Your help is still needed. Please contact our Director of Development, Zachary D. Wood, at zwood@covenanthousepa.org to discuss how you can continue to partner with us as we get set to open our doors to more homeless youth.

Upcoming Events:

Covenant House Young Professional's Poker Tournament

On Friday, October 1st, Covenant House Young Professionals will be holding their Third Annual Texas Hold'em Poker Tournament at the Urban Saloon in Fairmount. Come and play some poker and blackjack, with all proceeds benefiting Covenant House Pennsylvania. This year's poker prizes include an iPad and much more! To attend the event, please contact Aileen Callahan at 215-951-5411 for ticket information.

Covenant House Taking the Lead on Human Trafficking

For the last few years, Covenant House Pennsylvania has been at the forefront of the issue of human trafficking in Pennsylvania. This summer has been very productive for our team and their efforts, as the lead agency on the Philadelphia Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition, and receiving recognition for their leadership. Our Outreach Team was asked by the U.S. State Department to meet with delegations from both Canada and Mexico to discuss human trafficking, and also traveled to central Pennsylvania to help develop efforts in other areas. CHPA Associate Executive Director, Hugh, Organ, was asked to be a part of a statewide task force to look at the issue of human trafficking in Pennsylvania, and also recently was a special guest on the Joy Keys Show raising awareness for the issue.

CHPA Success Story: Meet Tanikah

Tanikah came to Covenant House Pennsylvania last October. She was in college, and doing pretty well, but she was homeless. For a safe place to sleep, she would stay late at her college until the campus buildings closed. By that time, she exhausted every resource she had, and could no longer find couches to crash on. Tanikah had nowhere else to go, and was relieved when a friend told her about "the Cov".

Tanikah was born in Erie with nine siblings. In her early teenage years, her mom had a stroke and could no longer take care of all of her children. Tanikah left with her father and traveled to Philadelphia, where she thought her life would get better. However, it was not long before her father turned to drugs. On the day after her high school graduation, Tanikah's father kicked her out of the house.

Tanikah was couch-surfing for about a month, before walking through the doors of Covenant House. Even though she was attending college, she was encouraged to also get a job and save up her money for her own place. She had

heard that KFC was hiring and, she decided she would give it a try to get a job. On her first attempt to apply for a position, she waited for hours wanting to speak to the manager only to not get her opportunity. She went back three days in a row, each day waiting for hours to prove her eagerness to start working. Finally, her persistence was rewarded when she got the job. After just a few months of working at KFC, she was

promoted to manager and all the while continued to keep her grades up in her college classes.

Tanikah never forgot where she came from and always wanted to make sure to give back, regardless of

her living situation. Even while in college, working, and living at Covenant House, she volunteered (and still does!) at the Boys and Girls Club on a regular basis, mentoring younger kids about making the right decisions in their own lives.

In April, Tanikah applied, and was accepted into the Rights of Passage program, Covenant House's transitional living program. Now, less than a year after coming through our doors, Tanikah has completed the Rights of Passage program and moved into her own apartment! Tanikah remains

"When you want to do something, Covenant House gets you motivated and help you do what you really want to do."



Photo by: Carl Hill

working at KFC and going to school, where she is working towards her Associate's Degree. She plans on continuing her education to get her Bachelor's Degree and wants to be a Probation Officer where she can continue to help others facing difficulty to stay focused on their own personal goals.

Tanikah talks about Covenant House with a smile on her face. She says, "The staff really lift me up." She further explained that "when you want to do something, Covenant House gets you motivated and help you do what you really want to do."

Tanikah is an inspiration and a breath of fresh air. Her dedication, resilience, and faith have kept her motivated through the toughest of times and the lowest of lows. She persevered, just like so many of our young people. All our kids need is to see that they are loved, supported, and respected, and they will indeed soar.