

Spring/Summer 2011

Newsletter



COVENANT HOUSE PENNSYLVANIA NEWSLETTER

The Cov

Message from Cordella

Dear CHPA's Friends and Supporters,

With spring comes new beginnings and excitement for the future, especially since this past year at the Cov has truly been a whirlwind. But we face the daily reality that more and more homeless youth are finding their way to our doorstep. With each new face, we are reminded of our commitment to meet these youth where they are and our mission to serve them with unconditional love and absolute respect. While we have much to celebrate here at CHPA, we must always keep on task and remain focused on the youth we serve.

The spring also brings a particular time of excitement to the Cov as we celebrate our youth who are graduating from school. This year we expect to see 8 youth graduate from High School or earn their GED! Our Education/Vocation Department has begun offering GED classes on site, which has directly affected the success of our youth reaching their educational goals. We have also begun offering culinary

experience to our youth who wish to go into the food industry.

I am overjoyed to report the opening of our new Rights of Passage facility in Kensington. The ribbon cutting was a star-studded event. Move in day for our current ROP youth brought a mixture of excitement, nervousness, and tearful hugs. This new facility will provide a crucial transition for these youth, bridging the gap between their time in the Crisis Center and true independence. With the support of people like you we were able to finish the construction of this building without any debt. Fortunately, we have expanded our services to meet the needs of our youth. Unfortunately, the operational costs associated with Rights of Passage are daunting.

We have been challenged by Covenant House International. They are offering a 2:1 match for each dollar we raise towards the Rights of Passage Program, up to \$100,000. You'll find a matching gift brochure included with this newsletter, so here is your

chance to directly affect the success of Rights of Passage, and make a difference in the life of a formerly homeless youth.

As always, I want to invite you to come and visit us. You can set up a time to visit the Crisis Center in Germantown or Rights of Passage in Kensington to see firsthand what we are doing in the lives of homeless youth. Feel free to reach out to me at 215-951-5411 or development@covenanthousepa.org.

I want to thank you all for your continued support and efforts. Be blessed and enjoy your summer!

Cordella Hill,
Executive Director



The First Week of Rights Of Passage (ROP)

We successfully moved in the "original" six ROP residents on Monday, May 23rd. Three car loads got all six residents and their belongings to the new site. After they got their stuff in their apartments, we were off to ShopRite on Aramingo Avenue. It was great to watch our kids work in teams and stick with their shopping list that they had set up before we left. They were all very proud of their first trip

to the supermarket, but they definitely need help with how to store groceries in a shopping cart - lots of squished bread and cereal boxes.

This first week has been a chance to get know the neighborhood, the Septa schedule and what the corner store offers (toilet paper!). We participated in a neighborhood cleanup on Thursday and a cookout at the community center on

Friday. The building is amazing and the kids love it. It has been 13 years in the making, but absolutely worth it and something our kids truly deserve.

On Memorial Day we moved two more youth in, bringing our total to eight! Please feel free to stop by anytime for a half court basketball game, to check out one of the apartments or just to say hello!

Rights of Passage Success Story: Derek

Derek was living with his Aunt and Uncle when they filed for divorce and asked him to leave. He bounced around between different adult shelters before he heard about Covenant House. Derek said, "This place is 160% better than any other shelter I've experienced. Covenant House has made me into a better person." When Derek first walked into the Crisis Center he thought it was a hotel. The staff

members were people he felt he could trust. He finally learned the skills he needed to get ahead such as job searching and interviewing skills. While living in the Crisis Center, Derek saw his younger brother struggling in the same ways he had on the streets. Eventually, he convinced him to come to Covenant House. Now they are both in the Rights of Passage Program, working toward their independence. Derek just finished Job Corps and got his high school diploma. He says even though he will always love this



place, he always knew he did not want to get too comfortable. He looks forward to saving enough money so he can get his own apartment and be able to provide for his young son.

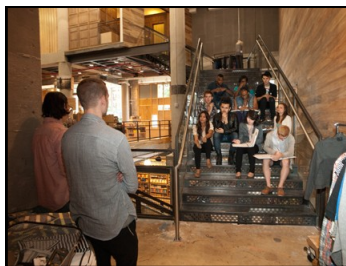
"Covenant House has made me into a better person."

☞ Cov Family Spotlight ☜

Urban Outfitters Charity Campaign

A few wonderful friends at **Urban Outfitters** recently voted for Covenant House PA to win a \$10,000 grant! Urban Outfitters launched a charity campaign to make considerable donations to a select few local charities. They wanted their employees to choose who would get the money. Covenant House PA was nominated and the voting began.

It was a tight race, for there were dozens of local charities in the running, but CHPA was one of the few that were awarded a



grant. Covenant House is blown away that the employees at Urban Outfitters chose to support our Mission. Not only did we receive a generous grant from them, but a few weeks later Urban Outfitters bestowed us with an incredible large donation of clothing. This will provide us with stylish clothes for our youth for many months to come.

The Container Store Gives Back

As we neared the end of construction for the new Rights of Passage facility, we realized we were in need shelving for each apartment. We contacted the **Container Store** to see if their products would work at a price we could afford. While pricing our

selections, they offered us an amazing 30% non-profit discount. After more conversations about Covenant House PA and what Rights of Passage will mean to our youth, they proceeded to donate \$2,200 worth of shelving, enough for two of the ten Rights

of Passage units. The ROP residents were overjoyed when they saw their apartments, and the generous gift of shelving will make all the difference in making them feel at home.

Got your own great idea to help Covenant House PA? Contact Zach Wood at development@coveanhousepa.org or 215-951-5411.

Crisis Center Success Story: Keith

Keith moved to Philadelphia to stay with extended family, not realizing they were not willing to help him. Quickly he found he did not have the skills to support himself. With no help no income, and no place to live, Keith found himself homeless. He was staying at a men's shelter when an adult resident told him about Covenant House. When he arrived, he found the guidance and

structure he needed. With the help of staff like Denise Johnson, our Education/Vocation specialist, he found a job. Denise reminded Keith of his mother, never falling for his antics and inspiring him to stay out of trouble. While on the street he found it hard to stay in touch with his mom, but after recently finding her on Facebook he was able to tell her about his new job! Keith said, "Covenant House was the reason I was finally able to start reaching

toward my goals." Keith wants to make his mother proud and looks forward to working hard so he can be accepted into our Rights of Passage program.



Education/Vocation Updates

One aspect of our program that sets us apart is our focus on helping our youth become gainfully employed and completing their education. Denise Johnson and Katie Gilmore, our Education/Vocation Specialists, are always looking for ways to improve our services and recently there have been amazing developments in our Education/Vocation Department. Denise Johnson has become certified to

conduct GED classes here on-site. This makes it possible for us to schedule GED classes at times that work around our programming schedule, making it easier for youth to achieve their educational goals. Katie Gilmore has become certified to proctor the ServSafe® exam on-site, and as the youth study for this exam they will gain hands on experience in our kitchen with Joanne Allman, Food Services

Coordinator, who is ServSafe® certified. The program will be 4 weeks long, at 32 hours a week, and upon completion the youth will take the ServSafe® exam. These changes will make a world of difference in the lives of so many of our youth who will have a new set of skills to add to their resumes, and more opportunities for employment.

Night of Broadway Stars

Covenant House Pennsylvania held its sixth annual "A Night of Broadway Stars" at the Kimmel Center for Performing Arts in the Perelman Theater on Monday, May 9th. This event was led by talented Broadway



producer Neil Berg with performances by some of Broadway's brightest stars who have lead in award winning shows such as *Phantom of the Opera*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Les Miserables*. Not only was this an amazing and memorable evening for everyone who attended, but it also raised significant proceeds for the many runaway and homeless youth that Covenant House serves every year. Other highlights of the event included a pre-show reception, a silent

auction, and a VIP post-show reception where guests could mingle with the Broadway Stars. Some of the most memorable parts of the show were when two youth courageously shared their testimonies with the audience and when young adults from Covenant House joined the Stars onstage to sing the song "Each Tear" by Mary J. Blige. Their obstacles and triumphs are truly inspiring and remind us of the potential each youth possess who pass through our doors.



COVENANT HOUSE PENNSYLVANIA

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Opening Doors for Homeless Youth.

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development@covenanthousepa.org

CHPA is now on Facebook and Twitter!

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<http://www.facebook.com/CovenantHousePA>

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Strike Out Youth Homelessness

On Friday, May 20th, the Covenant House Young Professionals (CHYP) held their 2nd Annual “Strike Out Youth Homelessness” Bowling Benefit at North Bowl. With over 100 people in attendance, they raised significant funds for Covenant House PA and raised awareness about the issue of youth homelessness. We would

especially like to thank the CHYP Board, who worked hard to make this event possible. We are actively recruiting for new board members and volunteers to help with CHYP events. The CHYP Board meets once a month. If you or anyone you know is a young professional looking to get involved and meet other like minded people, please contact us or find us on Facebook!

Philadelphia Marathon

Have you heard the news? Covenant House Pennsylvania is a Charity Partner for the Philadelphia Marathon this coming November! This is a great opportunity for Covenant House to tell more people about the great work that happens here everyday. This is also a great opportunity for YOU to sign up to run for the Covenant House Home Team! We are looking for people interested in all aspects of the Marathon weekend - from the 8k, to the half-marathon, and even the full marathon! Join our Home Team and run for these youth who are so in need of a home and for

the people who care about them. We need your help to make a difference.

If you have any friends or family members interested in running the marathon for Covenant House, please let us know and we can sign them up for our Home Team and send them more information. You can contact Aileen Callahan at acallahan@covenanthousepa.org or 215-951-5411.

To learn more about the marathon, check out the Philadelphia Marathon website and click on Charity Partners.

Rights of Passage Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

The new Rights of Passage facility is finally complete! On Tuesday, April 19th, Covenant House Pennsylvania held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new transitional housing unit that will sleep 20 of our youth each night. We were honored to have Jon Bon Jovi, Mayor Nutter, Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez, and Bishop Robert Maginnis in attendance. Before the event, Jon Bon Jovi met with two of our youth currently in the Rights of Passage program to hear more about their stories and how Covenant House has made a

difference in their lives. In his address to those gathered at the new facility, Jon Bon Jovi expressed his commitment to joining Covenant House in the fight against homeless youth. “For us to allow a generation

to be lost to homelessness, denies all of us of their talents, visions and the difference these young adults could add to their communities.” Mayor Nutter and Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez echoed their support and applauded Covenant House Pennsylvania for the great work with homeless youth in the city of Philadelphia. Covenant House would like to thank all of our gracious donors who contributed to this worthy cause – we really could not have made this dream a reality without you!

