

# 'The Cov'



## *Greetings From Our New Executive Director*

Dear CHPA's Friends and Supporters, Words can't express the joy I feel this evening. Ten years ago, I came to work with Jerome Kilbane and Father Stephen Sinari to build Covenant House Pennsylvania, and I immediately knew I was home. For almost 8 years, we worked with the underserved youth of this city, offering them unconditional love and absolute respect, and helping them get their lives back on track. Two years ago, I went to Covenant House International in New York City to serve as the Director of Program Improvement, where I had the honor of helping to document and share the programmatic efforts of all of the Covenant House sites.

Earlier this year, Jerome Kilbane, CHPA's founding Executive Director,

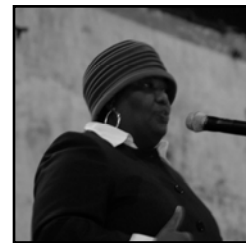
accepted the prestigious offer to run the Covenant House site in New York City, the oldest and largest of the Covenant House sites. As a New Yorker, this move was a sort of "coming home" for Jerry. The honor of serving as the new Executive Director here in Philadelphia is a "coming home" for me as well, and I am so happy and so honored to be back here with my Covenant House family.

What an honor it is to celebrate 10 years of Covenant House in Philadelphia this year. With your help we have served over 10,000 homeless young people in need over these first 10 years. This year has been exceptional in that we have served more kids than ever before and thanks to our supporters we have been able to serve these young people with a continuum of care designed to help them get off the streets and into an independent life style.

I wish I could say to you right now that

we have served all of the youth that need our services but as you know, the need is far greater than the more than 500 kids that came through our shelter last year. The City of Philadelphia recently reported that there were 5,700 young people between the ages of 18 and 23 who were classified as "head of household" and fended for themselves. The need for our services is greater than our capacity, and with your help, we will continue to build that capacity and continue to help these young people find their way off the street.

Thank you so very much for your continued support of Covenant House Pennsylvania.



Cordella Hill,  
Executive Director

## *Celebrating the Holidays at Covenant House*

As the holidays are fast approaching, we are mindful that this wonderful time can also be a tough time for homeless youth. Thinking about family that has abandoned you, struggling to find a hot meal and a warm bed, wondering what the next day may bring – any one of these painful realities could destroy even the toughest adult. But for those young people who say 'yes' to Covenant House and come to stay at our shelter, there are endless opportunities for a brighter and more productive future. Although Covenant House can never replace the loss of a family, the unconditional love and absolute respect our staff offers a young person in need goes a long way to fill that void.

Every year Covenant House holds a Community Christmas Dinner at the shelter

and an inviting sense of community and family permeates the entire building. Last year, Over 125 current and former shelter residents and other program participants came to share dinner and open gifts with their "family" – a collection of Covenant House staff and friends that gathered together to make these holidays special for our kids. Each young person leaves with an overflowing stocking, a full stomach, and the knowledge that no matter how difficult life can get, they can always call or stop by "the Cov" for a kind word, a great meal or whatever else they might need.

If you would like to know more about supporting CHPA and the youth we serve, contact Zachary D. Wood at 215-951-5411 ext. 1107 or [zwood@covenanthousepa.org](mailto:zwood@covenanthousepa.org).



This year's Covenant House Christmas Party will be held on December 22, 2009, and we anticipate over 100 youth and children will be in attendance.

## Rights of Passage Campaign Update

Five years ago, Covenant House Pennsylvania had a dream to address a major gap in the provision of transitional housing for homeless youth, by planning to drastically expand its Rights of Passage program. In 2008, there were only 40 transitional beds in the entire state of Pennsylvania for this population. 8 of those beds were at Covenant House. The dream was to build a brand new facility that would house 20 young people as they transition from street life to independence.

We have worked tirelessly to make this dream a reality. Over these last 5 years, we have raised over \$3 million and we are coming into what we hope are the final stages of preparation before we break ground and begin construction in the coming months.

Before we get there, we have a lot of finite details and a very short timeline to complete these final pieces. In the next 60 days, we will be "closing" with the Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia and the rest of our funding sources, and finalizing our construction documents and building permits. There is so much to be done and everything must now go as planned for us to make this final push to the finish.

There have been many bumps in the road to get to this point, but we are almost there. At the end of this journey, we will have increased the number of transitional beds for youth in the state of Pennsylvania by 50%.

What we need now are your prayers. Please pray with us, and our young people, as we advance toward the finish line.

## Upcoming Events:

### New CHPA Website!

We are in the process of a total redesign of our website here at CHPA, and we are so excited for you to see the new and improved site!

We are planning to launch this new site on **January 15, 2010**, so check with us in the new year at [www.covenanthousepa.org](http://www.covenanthousepa.org).

### CHPA's Fifth Annual "Night of Broadway Stars"

Mark your calendars now and save the date for our 2010 theater celebration and fundraising extravaganza!

**When: May 3, 2010, 6pm**

**Where: Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts**

For more information, contact Zachary D. Wood at 215 951-5411 ext.1107 or [zwood@covenanthousepa.org](mailto:zwood@covenanthousepa.org).

## CHPA Success Story: Meet George

We'd like to share with you the story of an amazing young man who received housing, emotional and physical support, and educational/vocational guidance at Covenant House this past year.

George is 21 years old. For most of his life, his mother was addicted to drugs and alcohol and his siblings were either on drugs or had dropped out of school.

George knew he had to leave home if he was going to do something positive with his life. He lived on the street for a few weeks before coming in to Covenant House, in February of this year. After 3 months in the Covenant House Crisis Center, George got a job with American Red Cross, moved to the Rights of Passage program, took classes at a technical school, and focused on getting into a four-year college to study Psychology.

As a proud supporter of Covenant House Pennsylvania, St. Joseph's University offers a full scholarship,

including room and board, to a young person from, Covenant House every other year. This past spring, George competed with 5 other youth from Covenant House for this prestigious scholarship. In May, he found out that he had been awarded the scholarship and would be attending St. Joseph's in Fall 2009.

Since starting college this past September,

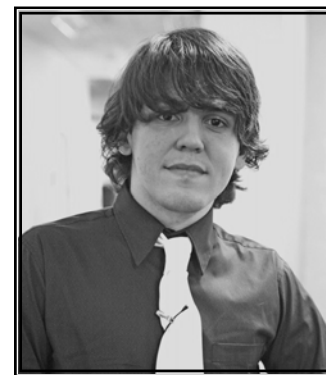
George has flourished in this new setting. He is enjoying every minute of his opportunity and has gotten very involved in campus activities. He recently had a lead role in the school's production of Grease, and has been doing extremely well in all of his classes.

While he was staying with us, George did an interview for a national video campaign about youth homelessness. Here is an excerpt of his story from that video:

"I found that the staff at Covenant House care about me. Something about

George

Photo by: Bridget Pizzo



this place is different. With the help of the staff, I was able to get a job in no time, and was even working two jobs for a while to save money. Everyone I met helped me, always pushing me to believe in myself and reach for my goals. Deep down inside, I always knew I could accomplish great things. When I needed it most, Covenant House was there to help me find my way. When I first came here, I was very reserved, but after seeing the love and support that was offered to me even on my bad days, I knew this was my family."