



Because you care, we want to keep
in touch with you.

Newsletter – 2015 Holiday Edition

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness. Starting on the Path to Independence



A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Greetings!

In 2015- we said goodbye to Dr. Edward Fisher a co-founder of the Institute of Urban Living (1985). Dr.

Fisher died at the age of 83 years on August 2nd. He was instrumental in supporting the formation of the Hyacinth's Place Project.

We mourn his loss, as we welcome another year that we hope will lead to continued growth, financial stability and successful programming. This is a year we plan to graduate more of our women to independent living and continue offering affordable housing units to others in need of our Behavioral and Therapeutic Services.

In 2015, with an extremely limited budget, we received a score of 100 on a scale of 100 from a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Certified Inspector, for our fifteen efficiency units that house formerly homeless women with a mental health diagnosis. It was also the year we welcomed graduate interns from educational institutions as Catholic University, Georgetown University School of Psychology, and Gallaudet University among others. We also hosted out first military veterans from the U.S. Air Force (through a fellowship program) and the U.S. Army (a psychology intern), all of whom offered their skills, knowledge and services to support the work of this organization. Our volunteers increased to a record number of twenty-six (26) from a wide cross-section of disciplines ranging from social media and public relations to financial management and landscaping services.

It was also the year that we hosted our first fundraising dinner to record numbers of supporters on Valentine's evening.

Oh! Our challenges were many.....and there were times of frustrations and questioning. We watched helplessly as issues affecting the mentally ill played out on a national stage with no meaningful dialogue about financial support for our work with this population. However, we inevitably remind ourselves of the reasons we ardently pursued our work....."the common good." Other times, we were reminded by our women who injected us with energy to continue. The look of trust and hope in a resident's eye, the news of a resident's high test score or a job interview, a donation for our work....there would always be a good reason to see the light at the end of the tunnel, the silver lining behind the cloud and a reason for us to carry on.

This year will be another year of hard work and we look forward to your continued support. Please work with us as we return formerly homeless women who are emotionally, financially and vocationally stable women to their families, their communities and to society.



ANNUAL DOOR DECORATING CHALLENGE: Hyacinth's 4th Annual Door Decorating Challenge!

Every year at Hyacinth's Place, our residents embrace the holiday spirit with elaborate decorations on the doors to their units! As part of this annual tradition, a contest is held on Christmas Eve with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes given to the artists behind the merriest door decorations



This year, over half of our women participated in the annual tradition, adding joy and festivities to our building. This holiday season decorations included an elaborate battery-operated light display, a handmade drawing of a snowman and children sledding, and detailed layers of wrapping paper covered in ribbons and snowflakes.

After much deliberation from our board members, the choices proved too difficult—there were too many incredible ornate and beautiful doors! The team of judges decided to award a total of six prizes:

- 1st Prize: Tina
- 2nd Prize: Regina and Jessica
- 3rd Prize: Hamilial and Cody
- 4th Prize: Anita

The lucky winners walked away with gift cards to Starbucks, a gift of warm beverages to make it stay warm during a cold winter. We thank each of our residents for contributing to the joyous holiday season and brightening up our building! Your enthusiasm and holiday spirit is what makes Christmas time such a special time at Hyacinth’s Place.



Ms. Coogler (Picture taken by Victoria Jones)

WE MADE STREET SENSE:

Street Sense, a newspaper published by the homeless, recently featured Hyacinth’s Place in its

publication. Its article featured two residents who told their stories of renewal. Ms. Coogler

explained that she came from transitional housing to Hyacinth’s Place. Since coming to our program, Ms. Coogler progressed enough to become an employee in our office. As Ms. Coogler described “Hyacinth’s has given me a job because I work here and I’m a resident, and it’s very stabilizing to be able to help the ladies, I’m also able to help myself, and it’s a win-win for me.”

Another resident, Ms. Gray, told how she benefitted from the individual therapy that the Behavioral and Therapeutic Services Program at Hyacinth’s Place provides. As she stated ““I talk to a counselor one-on-one, and we discussed even bringing in members of my family to the counseling. It helps to keep me grounded ... My counselor has been telling me to journal lately, so that’s helped.”

Finally, the article noted that Hyacinth’s Place provides the individual attention necessary for residents to become independent. As Ms. Gray proclaimed “It’s a good start in life because a lot of people that’s here come from hard times, and it’s a good way to get on your feet and have support.” For further information:

<http://streetsense.org/article/hyacinths-place-defines-supportive-housing-for-women/#.VrZFWlgrLNN>.



CARMEN- A SUCCESS STORY.

Carmen is a 36 year old woman who interviewed for residence at Hyacinth’s Place straight from an area shelter where she lived for over a year. Prior to this she was on the streets. She was born a normal baby but contracted meningitis at six months. When she recovered she was deaf and never spoke. She has been mute all her life. Her diagnoses are mental retardation; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse and HIV.

Carmen’s complexion is what I like to think of as “Rich Mahogany”. She now has beautifully groomed healthy wooly locks after 4 years of

attention to her personal care. In communicating with Carmen, it is clear she thinks that she was born into a society and culture where the color of skin and the texture of your hair determined the degrees of acceptance and the treatment you will receive. Carmen says she always felt rejected by society, starting at home where her only sister was of “light” complexion with no mental health challenges.

Carmen presented a problem for her single mother living in poverty and denial. At a very young age, Carmen was sexually abused by a family member and her subsequent pregnancy resulted in the birth of her daughter. Culture, religion and “family values” did not allow exposing this “shame”, so her trauma was a well-kept family secret and so was her child. The experience was not spoken about and her trauma went untreated.

Today we are aware of “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” (PTSD) but in the ensuing years following Carmen’s rape, there was no name to attach to her “unexplainable behavior”. In adolescence, she became “uncontrollable” and initially found comfort in alcohol, then harder drugs. When Carmen became “sick and tired” and was taken from the streets to the hospital and from the hospital to a shelter, she eventually found her way to “Hyacinth’s Place.”

Accepting Carmen was easy. However, regardless of the “good intentions” from HP’s clinicians and the desperation from the Shelter’s representative to find a good home for Carmen, it took less than two months of residency before the “Attorney’s Letters” started arriving. . Among other things, these stated that Hyacinth’s Place was not equipped to accommodate a deaf resident without providing sign-language interpreters, a unit with equipment for deaf and other provisions that surpassed Hyacinth’s Place’s budget and/or expectations. We were violating her rights and the facility was violating the law.....etc.

How does a non-profit organization intent on having an impact on the cycle of homelessness and restoring lives through meaningful therapeutic and support services, meet the complex needs of the traumatized and very needy population? Hyacinth’s place struggled to do so. However, through the generosity of sign language students, the donation of equipment and a great deal of ingenuity we provided this woman with necessary services.

The staff of Hyacinth’s Place worked with Carmen through her struggles recognizing her need to grow and become self-sufficient. Her challenge to achieve a better quality of life, to communicate and to be treated with respect was one she contended with diligently. It has been four years and Carmen is now ready to re-enter the general community. She is doing this with new skills and confidence. Carmen has recognized/discovered her skills as a photographer and she is willing to accept any job and to work hard. This has gained her consistent employment. She has a stable relationship with her family and in December 2015 her application was accepted for housing in a newly constructed beautiful one bedroom apartment in the greater Washington D.C area.



Bria Culp

WELCOMING OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS! A

Hyacinth’s Place newsletter is never complete without a huge shout out to our amazing team of volunteers and interns. We are thrilled to welcome the psychological expertise of Bria Culp, who is interning at Hyacinth’s Place as a psychology intern for her spring semester. In addition to getting started knowing our ladies and readying herself for a semester of counseling, Bria has already gone out of her to reach out to local businesses on H Street. As a local resident, Bria is excited to use her network of acquaintances to connect Hyacinth’s Place with neighboring restaurants, business, and organizations.



Amanda Milligan

We would also like to announce our new social media and online content volunteer, Amanda Milligan! Amanda is writing new content as well as restructuring our website, and partnering with our web design volunteer Deitra Jackson to revamp our website. Her hard work will come to fruition by mid-February, so everyone stay on your toes for the relaunch of our website! A native Floridian, karaoke star, and lead singer of a rock band, Amanda brings her warm presence and fantastic sense of humor to Hyacinth's Place, for which we are endlessly grateful.



Niki Branch

desk, researching long-term business plans, redesigning our logo, and even painting an exquisite painting now hanging on the third floor! Niki brings with her endless laughter, selfless passion, and an abundance of skills, and we are thankful for all she contributes to Hyacinth's Place.

We are also blessed to work with another new volunteer, Niki Branch. A brilliant feminist with an incredible sense of humor, Niki does just about everything for us—(wo)manning the front



Painting by Niki

Without our volunteers, new and old, Hyacinth's Place would not be able to carry out our mission of providing housing and comprehensive services to homeless women with a mental health diagnosis, and enabling them to create a path towards independence, fulfillment, and good health. Here's to a special 2016 with a special team of people!



Rosario Diaz Gonzalez

WELCOMING A NEW STAFF MEMBER AT HYACINTH'S PLACE: ROSARIO DIAZ GONZALEZ!

Rosario is a part-time employee who brings energy, enthusiasm and a keen sense of commitment to the mission of Hyacinth's Place. In her very short tenure, she has secured donations, gifts and promises from friends and

families that have been a tremendous help to the organization.



CALLING ALL SHOPPERS. Did you know that if you shop on Amazon, the site will donate money to Hyacinth's Place? *How does it work?* Prior to shopping, pick Hyacinth's Place (<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1410842/>) as your charity of choice. Then, you can shop to your heart's content. Through its AmazonSmile program, Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the price of eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Hyacinth's Place.

Finally, remember that we have an EBay store and are always looking for donations of memorabilia, accessories, small electronics and furniture. Money raised by both programs goes to support our goal of providing support services to our residents.



TRANSPARENCY AND INTERNET PRIVACY POLICY: Hyacinth's Place is committed to cultivating an atmosphere of accountability and transparency. Hyacinth's Place has been designated both a Top-Rated Non Profit by GreatNonprofits (a review site for nonprofits) and a Bronze-level Guide Star Exchange participant.

Our Internet Privacy Policy. *Your privacy is extremely important to us, and we'll do everything we can to protect it. To this end, our organization maintains an opt-in policy for its email communications. That means we only want to send mail to individuals who have requested that these mailings be sent to them or to people with whom we*

have an ongoing individual or business relationship.” To unsubscribe from our email list, please email info@hyacinths.org and include the word “unsubscribe” in the subject line.