



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

*Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness. Starting on the Path to Independence. Spring Edition Newsletter 2015*



**GREETINGS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE**

**DIRECTOR.**



**Friends:** Only three months of 2015 have past and so many exciting things already have happened. Our first fundraiser of the year, our

inaugural Valentine Dinner and Dance, was quite successful. Our faithful supporters and friends had a rollicking time and we made it a night to remember. One of our first residents to enter Hyacinth's Place is preparing to move to her own apartment. She is now employed on a full time basis, owns a car and recently received the "White House Presidential Medal" for volunteering to mentor re-entrants from the prison system. Our work continues to be filled with challenges but it is equally rewarding. Please continue to follow our progress on our website and social media pages and please continue to support our efforts. You make all the difference. I hope you enjoy our fifth edition.



**VALENTINE DINNER AND DANCE:** On Saturday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, we held our Inaugural Valentine's Day Dinner Dance. Despite the snowy weather, the dinner was well attended by staff, clients, volunteers, and guests.

At Hyacinth's Place, our residents excitedly prepared to attend the event and carpoled to the reception hall. Volunteers adorned the reception hall with beautiful red balloon bouquets and tables with flowers and candles.

We were treated to a scrumptious meal prepared by Chef Randy Fullard that included baked chicken and tilapia,

yellow rice, seasoned green beans, red velvet cake and cheesecake.



**Our residents waiting to carpool to the reception hall.**



**Beautifully decorated table with flowers and candles by Volunteers.**



**Guests enjoying great food and conversation.**

While eating, we were treated to music provided by a local live band, MP3. Our Executive Director told the audience about the good work that we are doing and the recent awards and honors that our clients have received including the fact that one of our clients is on the Dean's List at her university.



**Ms. Davis, Hyacinth's Place Program Manager, selling raffle tickets!**

After our meal, there was a drawing for the donated gift baskets of Mary-Kay Cosmetics, Gourmet Chocolate, and a "Valentine's Surprise."

Finally, we lowered the lights and our guests danced the evening away to music from the 60's through the present and line dances including the "wobble." We thank the members of the volunteer committee for the many hours that they spent planning and orchestrating such a wonderful event. *We can't wait for next year's Valentine Dinner and Dance!!*



**VOLUNTEER CORNER:** We need you to do two things. First, pass our story on to your friends, family, and coworkers. Tell them what you do and how much you contribute to our organization. Encourage them to visit our website and social media pages, read our blog and newsletter, and, of course, donate their time and treasure. Explain to them about the dual need for housing and supportive services. Spread the word about our program on social media. Finally, join us in speaking out against the stigma surrounding mental illness and increasing community awareness on issues affecting homelessness and mental health.



**SHE WON FIRST PLACE!!** We have a resident poet – Dynise won first place in a writing contest sponsored by the Housing For All Campaign. She writes poetry to heal her body, mind, and spirit. A few years ago Dynise was homeless and battling schizoaffective disorder. She described her life then saying "I would have a very high high and automatically go to a very low within an hour." She knew something was wrong and sought help from Hyacinth's Place. Fast forward to today, Dynise is doing well and feeling great. She now works part time as administrative assistant for Hyacinth's Place. Her story was featured as part of a NBC-4 segment on Hyacinth's Place. Her poetry also is often showcased in our newsletter so be sure to look out for her work.



**First Place Winner Dynise (right) receiving her award at the Housing For All Rally**



**GOOD NEIGHBORS.** I remember those meetings vividly. Although it was over eight years ago, seems as if it was yesterday that I nervously entered those halls and faced a sea of hostile faces. One of the line items on the agenda was “the Ward 5 Area Neighborhood Commission (ANC) approval of a building to house homeless women with a mental health diagnoses.” As the evening progressed, the general consensus was “not in my backyard”. “You will bring down the value of our homes and ruin our neighborhood.”

Fast-forward to 2011, Hyacinth’s Place opened its doors to fifteen homeless women with a mental health diagnoses. Attached to each lease was our policy to which each woman must adhere. Policies that were intended to make us “Good Neighbors”. For four years, Hyacinth’s Place has become the place where the area police come for copies of tapes for the many incidents in the neighborhood captured by our cameras.



However, our pride and joy is the sidewalk restructuring. For years the sidewalk stretching from Levi Street past Hyacinth’s Place for another block, was cracked in some places, broken in others and flaunted a deep hole directly in front of a bus-stop. The elderly, handicap and the kids were forced to walk in the busy street to avoid potential injury.

Hyacinth Place, Councilman Kenyan McDuffie (Ward 5) and the District of Columbia Department of Transportation worked together to develop a strategy to repair the sidewalk. The plan was implanted earlier this month. The large trucks and flashing lights with detour signs were in front of our building for two days. When they left we had a beautifully paved new sidewalk. The diligent and persistent staff of Hyacinth’s Place finally exhaled.

*A WOMAN*

*She is dry  
And time is taking her away  
Her hands that were silken threads  
Of spun gold, are now  
Spotty parchment*

*Her hair  
that once was a luxurious halo  
Is now a mass of tangled weed  
Her mind so sharp, is now a lazy  
snail*

*She is dry and time is taking her  
away  
For love and friendship and happy  
moments  
of laugh are all but forgotten  
And memories fail to keep her  
Withered body warm.....*

Denise Coogler.



**BUDGET UPDATE.** Mayor Muriel Bowser held three budget engagement forums to get input from District residents about programs they care about. Hyacinth's Place attended and joined many other organizations calling for more funding for permanent supportive housing.



**Mayor Muriel Bowser at a Budget Engagement Forum attended by Hyacinth's Place staff.**

On April 2, Mayor Muriel Bowser released her budget proposal. She has been vocal about her commitment to affordable housing, and we are optimistic because her budget reflects that promise. Now that the Mayor released her budget, City Councilmembers will hold hearings to get input from the public. If you are interested in testifying in support of permanent supportive housing funding, please contact [Vanessa@hyacinths.org](mailto:Vanessa@hyacinths.org). You can watch for more budget updates on Facebook and Twitter!



**CHA-CHA-CHA...AND BURN THOSE POUNDS!!!** *“Exercise is not an overnight quick fix; it is a healthy way of living and a life style change”* “Work out buddies.....” Staff and residents at Hyacinth's Place are walking and dancing the pounds away...Twice each week the music can be heard in the conference area as the Leslie Sansone “Just Walk” DVD set the pace for our exercise sessions.

The purpose of the exercise classes is to teach our women that regular exercise is good for their physical and mental health. We also educate them about the “BMI” range, building muscles, strengthen the heart, and of course losing unwanted pounds and/or inches of body fat. We stress that in addition to the physical reasons, regular exercise keeps the mind thinking healthy, increases endurance, stamina, and/or flexibility. We are at the point in our exercise regime where we have

incorporated a “Latin Dance Exercise” DVD, which is middle to high- impact. There is a lot of “cha- cha-cha” moves... this is going over “big” with our ladies..... Cha-cha- cha...and burn those pounds!!!!!!  
(Written by LaTonia Davis, Residential Program Manager)



**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.





## **Hyacinth's Place Needs YOU!**

Hyacinth's Place is currently recruiting individuals to serve on its Board of Directors. This volunteer position works to define Hyacinth's Place's mission, sets objectives and goals for the achievement of that mission. The requirements for potential board members are as follows:

- Must be a resident of the District of Columbia.
- Must have experience, knowledge working with non-profit organizations.
- Areas of expertise in one or more of the following fields:
  - Fundraising
  - Development
  - Finance
  - Law
  - Politics
  - Psychology
  - Psychiatry/Mental Health
  - Homelessness
- Willingness to give the time necessary to assist a small non-profit in its development.
- If interested, please send an email to [info@hyacinths.org](mailto:info@hyacinths.org) or call 202-618-3344.
- Visit our home page ([www.hyacinths.org/lead.html](http://www.hyacinths.org/lead.html)) and access the link to **Read the Board Invitation Letter!**



## **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 Great Non Profits and a Bronze-level GuideStar Exchange participant.

*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](mailto:info@hyacinths.org) and include the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line. If your contact information has changed, please let us know,*

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