Community House News

Graduating Seniors
Congratulations to our 2012 High School Seniors that graduated from Anacostia and Ballou Senior High Schools!

Cory's Homecoming
Former House Student, Cory finished his freshman year in college. He came back in May to speak to our current high school seniors about his college experience and encouraged them to do their best. Thank you Cory for giving back!

Fall Golf Tournament
Thank you to Ed Tarbutton, Golf Chair for organizing our 13th Annual Golf Tournament on October 4, 2012. Also, thank you to long-time golf Co-chairs for 13 years George Dunn and John Yetman.

La Wonda Bornstein (President & CEO), Steve Fitzhugh (Co-founder), Jonathan Harris (Director of Outreach & Academics) and former House student Keith Kelly (Music Production Specialist) spent 10 days in Ghana learning, building relationships and giving back. Imagine the joy for Keith of discovering that, rather than being a victim of poverty, he had significant contributions he could make in Ghana.

Why Ghana? The mission of The House is to introduce students and their families to Christ and to bring them hope by meeting their physical and spiritual needs. One of the real deficiencies of many students who attend The House, who are of African decent is their lack of knowledge of who they are, not only their heritage but their spiritual history as well. In many other cultures in America, it is important and common for family histories and heritages to be often rehearsed. In communities like Anacostia in southeast DC it’s not the case. Some students have no relationship with their fathers and it’s not rare for a student not even to know who their father is or to have never met their father. Where there is no understanding of “who I am” there is no grasp of a sense of purpose. Where there is no purpose, abuse is inevitable. In Ghana the staff was able to make the connection between the youth of southeast DC and pre-slavery Africa, a spiritual, proud and gifted people. It is well documented that the victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, some estimates as high as 80%, left from the west coast of African in Ghana.

The House was able to coordinate the delivery of basic equipment needed for The recording studio. One of the real highlights of the trip was watching former House student Keith Kelly wire and install this studio. Today, thanks to The House DC, Easy After School Haven has its own professional music recording studio! It’s the only one of its kind in the entire country! Keith has himself had to overcome many obstacles growing up in southeast Washington,
DC. To see him surrounded by dozens of young African music enthusiasts hanging on his every word, as he taught them to produce indigenous music, was a sight to behold. By the end of the course on Basic Music Production 101, Keith’s class was able to produce, engineer and record their first live song.

The team from The House was the guest of honor at a community-wide praise and worship celebration. Keith again proved himself by relocating from the Youth Center to the Church the sound equipment for this major event and by serving as the audio technician. Steve Fitzhugh, through an interpreter, presented the gospel and the host pastor led many to the Lord.

On our last night at dinner, Keith was asked how he came to be connected to The House. He began to describe his life in the 8th grade. He said he saw Steve Fitzhugh speak to his 8th grade class at Kramer Middle School, then again in the 9th grade at Anacostia High. The House has a program in Anacostia High School and while Keith had made a decision to drop out of school, he met one of our staff who talked him into coming to The House. He said that from the moment he first saw the studio and worked with JT Thompson (Director of Music Production) his whole life changed. At this point, for the first time on our journey, Keith could no longer hold his emotions back. Tears washed over his face, he could no longer speak. In between his grateful sobs he said, “and now I’m in Africa.”

Once we arrived back in the United States we took a shuttle bus to our terminal from our international flight. Steve Fitzhugh sat next to an African-American man to whom he felt inclined to describe our mission. Steve told him all about Keith. The man became extremely excited. “Steve do you know what this means? This is incredible! Keith has completed the cycle! In a form, Keith left the west coast of Africa in the mid 1700’s through the door of no return. He survived the middle passage of the trans-Atlantic slave trade where 1 in 5 died. He survived the auction block when he arrived to the New World. He survived the plantation and the cruel slave masters. He survived segregation and then desegregation. He survived the fire hoses and the police dogs of the civil rights movement. He survived southeast Washington, DC. He came to The House and got trained and equipped as a professional.” And then almost shouting on the shuttle bus he said, “Keith returned to the west coast of Africa bringing knowledge and the gifting of his skill set for the people! Keith accomplished what Africa is asking of it’s descendants around the world. Complete the cycle!”

The entire team was deeply affected by this trip, and Keith’s life will never be the same. He was able to feel pride in his own roots, he was able to see himself as a young man with much to give, and he was able to thank God who created him an African-American and made him a new creation in Christ.

---

**What God Has Joined Together!**

In the past I have written to you about the wonderful staff that ministers at The House. Their love, wisdom, and dedication have been a lifeline to the youth of Anacostia and a joy to all of us who are privileged to know them. So you can imagine my delight to share with you that two of our staff, La Wonda Harris and Ray Bornstein, have decided to share the rest of their lives together in marriage.

La Wonda serves as President and CEO of The House, and Ray serves as CFO & COO. Together they have faithfully served our Lord Jesus and this community with their lives, and we could not happier for them.

This past March 2012, La Wonda called a special meeting of The House Board of Directors to share this news and to ask the board to appraise any organizational implications that may result. As President, La Wonda has long enforced organizational transparency and accountability in order to promote faithful stewardship of all resources. While this marriage does not change the responsibility carried by La Wonda and Ray, it does place their combined responsibility within one family. As such the Board is reviewing internal processes and procedures to ensure continued efficient and transparent operation in all functional areas of The House.

Please join me in congratulating our happy couple, and in thanking the Lord for this wonderful blessing.

Sincerely,

**Guy Speers**

Chairman
House DC Students See Red at 2012 Spring Retreat

LEFT: Jesse and Ahmad on paddle boat.
RIGHT: Group picture of House students returning from retreat: Toni, Lauren, Tony, Gaia, Jameal, Kiana, & JR.

The House’s annual spring retreat was held in April at Summit Lake, a beautiful Christian retreat center in Emmitsburg, MD. The House hosts student retreats twice a year to allow House staff to communicate with youth away from the distractions of the city. A simple change in environment enables students to fully tune in to the voice and presence of God, setting the stage for life changes and powerful transformations to take place.

This year’s theme was “Red Friday,” which emphasized how Jesus shed His blood on Good Friday to redeem all mankind and to show that He is the way, the truth and the life. The theme was also chosen to deliberately counter a popular negative song with a similar title. Staff use what students are listening to and watching to communicate with them in their language, but also to provide an alternative perspective based on the Bible.

All the students who attended the retreat either gave their lives to Christ or rededicated their lives. One student went to the retreat as an unbeliever, but later that weekend asked to pray and prayed such a powerful prayer that a few staff members and many students were in tears. Students and staff were simply in awe of how quickly and powerfully God began to move in that student’s life as she gave her life to Christ.

Another student who was Muslim and had been attending The House for a few years also gave his life to Christ at the retreat. He’s an intelligent and skilled rapper who came to The House because of the recording studio. After several years of attending life sessions (based on Biblical principles) at The House and experiencing the presence of God at the annual retreats, he finally accepted Jesus Christ.

In addition to stretching and strengthening the students’ faith, the retreats also provide an opportunity to expand the students overall horizons and life experiences. Prior to the spring retreat, many of the students had never been on a paddle boat. One student was too afraid to get in the boat, but after a staff person finally convinced them, they got on and then didn’t want to get off! That’s exactly how it was for some of the students when it came to accepting Christ. They were hesitant and fearful at first, but once they “got on the boat” with Jesus, they didn’t want to turn back!

A simple change in environment enables students to fully tune in to the voice and presence of God.
Setbacks are No Deterrent

Earlier this year, one of our college students, Tanicka received a notice from the college she had been attending that they were closing down. With only one year left to graduate, and only months away from the start of the fall semester, Tanicka was suddenly faced with finding another college that would accommodate her and her child.

Tanicka is a single parent who has been committed to pursuing a college degree to help make a better life for herself and her child. In spite of the major setback of her college closing, Tanicka expressed such a passionate and strong determination to finish college that the Outreach & Academic Director, Jonathan Harris took time during his sabbatical and the 4th of July week to help her search for another school. Once he found a school for her, he not only drove her to the campus in North Carolina, he also drove her around to find a place where she and her child could live. Unfortunately all of her credits were not accepted so instead of only one year left to graduate, she will have another two years before she receives her degree. Also, the school she previously attended was designed for single parents and provided daycare onsite, enabling parents to live on campus with their child. She now is faced with covering the cost of childcare in addition to her other expenses.

From left: Patti & Richard Schacht with Scholarship recipient Tanicka.

Thanks to long-time House supporters Richard & Patti Schacht, who provide a college scholarship each year to The House, Tanicka will receive help with some basic living expenses while she pursues her degree.

The House is preparing to open a new Life Skills & Academic Center which will help countless other students who, like Tanicka, are determined to let nothing deter them from pursuing academic success. Once construction is complete (by volunteers from Turner Construction Company), the newest addition to The House DC will be one more reason students and their families in the Anacostia community will have hope for a better future. If you would like to help fund the new center, provide academic scholarships, or help us with fundraising efforts we could certainly use your support.

We admire Tanicka’s commitment and are honored that we and our faithful supporters, Richard & Patti Schacht, are able to play such a pivotal role in helping her move forward—for her sake, and for the sake of her young child.