IT’S MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE

Many of us are familiar with the Scripture, “It’s more blessed to give than to receive.” This Scripture is quoted so often, however, that we may not realize how powerful it is to actually see it applied in real life. The House DC staff had a chance to see these powerful words in action when our students willingly offered others the same care and support that they themselves have received.

One of the critical aspects of the ministry of The House DC is providing our students with a hot, hearty meal. We have fed countless youth over these past 17 years and have also provided emergency food for the community. But this fall, we did something we have wanted to do for quite some time. Our students, many of whom rely on the meals we provide at The House, took time to care about others also in need. They put together bags of food and walked around giving out hot dogs, chips, and drinks to people throughout the community. They even stopped by a food line while people were waiting to get inside and gave them something they could eat on the spot. One lady remarked that “this was right on time” and told the students “thank ya’ll so much, we really appreciate this.” Others encouraged them to stay focused and not to give up, reminding them that they are what the community needs.

Our students shared how good it felt to be appreciated and personally make a positive contribution to their community. What an amazing experience for them to hear that “they are what the community needs” and be part of something so generous when they themselves are in need.
SUMMER PROGRAM

The House DC offers a free summer camp for elementary and middle school aged youth. With parents’ work schedules, kids are often home alone all day, or spend their time walking around the neighborhood. This leaves young children extremely vulnerable to getting swept up in gang activity, exposed to street violence, and in extreme cases, even kidnapping. The summer program also offers employment opportunities for high school age youth and other young adults.

One such youth was Dajah, who like the rest of our summer workers attends a vigorous training, which includes how to treat children—the most important ingredient to our very successful summer ministry. During the training for 20 young people, the President & CEO, La Wonda Bornstein and Executive Director of Programs, Andrea Counts identified the teams that would best utilize the teens’ gifts. One young lady, Dajah was assigned to the cooking team led by Kimberly Hall, Assistant to the President.

By the time Dajah was six both her parents were murdered. Dajah believes that people’s prayers helped her get through the darkest times of her young life. She enjoyed hanging out with Kimberly and preparing the food. She also expressed how it felt to hear so many compliments about the food and her service. Even after the Summer Program ended Kimberly continues to spend time mentoring Dajah. She is learning good work ethics, how to care for herself personally and how to handle money. “I have learned that hard work pays off, be honest always, and rely on my faith in God to get me through life,” says Dajah. With all the personal tragedies in her life, Dajah feels that coming to The House DC has made her feel valued.

“I have learned that hard work pays off, be honest always, and rely on my faith in God.”
— Dajah

House youth coming back from a field trip
Kim Hall and Dajah

House staff, LaBaron Houston, reading to our youth
Some beautiful paths can’t be discovered without first getting lost. Jasmine has grown to make valuable decisions in order to change her life. But with change comes sacrifice. Recently, Jasmine had to sacrifice something that she never imagined in order to stay on her newly found path.

This school year has been a complete turn of events for Jasmine. Not only has she turned away from her old behaviors, but now the people who she thought were her “best friends” have turned on her.

The very same group of friends who she shared some of the most challenging moments of life with, such as being homeless, being abused, and being mistreated have now made Jasmine their new target. For several months she’s been taunted and provoked by people she thought were her friends all because of her positive lifestyle changes. The same friends she fought with and for now want to fight her. The same friends that she told her deepest secrets to, are now spreading rumors about her.

A lot of youth would have given up under such circumstances, but Jasmine is standing and stronger than ever. She hasn’t reverted back to her old ways and her grades haven’t dropped. Though her heart has been broken, she’s still able to find peace. Jasmine understands that losing that group of friends was a sacrifice she had to make in order to stay on the path to becoming a successful young woman.

No matter who has turned their backs on Jasmine, she knows that she can always depend on The House. You can find staff cheering Jasmine on as she helps lead the high school's volleyball team to victory, encouraging her to work hard and stay focused, and continuing to love and support her.

Jasmine has lost many people that she thought would be there with her forever. However, she recently connected with an old friend Tija, who was once in Jasmine’s shoes. Two years ago, Tija hung out with that same group of friends—fighting, skipping school, and making poor decisions. When Tija started attending The House, she realized that she wasn’t leading a healthy lifestyle so she decided to change. She too became an outcast.

Today, Tija is working part-time, a senior in high school, earning good grades, and a leader in student government. She also received the Bill & Melinda Gates achievers scholarship to assist with her college studies.

Jasmine and Tija are inseparable! Whether they are walking to school, studying, or playing sports together you rarely see one without the other. They now see things in a different light and their bond has become unbreakable. Jasmine and Tija were both lost young women who finally discovered their beautiful paths. They put their faith in God, and are allowing Him to guide their steps.
CHRISTMAS IN ANACOSTIA

Even though the winter holiday season is a few months out of the year, many of us spend the majority of the year in anticipation of the food, family, friends and fun that accompany Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s. The holidays, especially Christmas, bring out the most generous and thankful side of most of us as we buy gifts for our loved ones, and anticipate spending time with them.

This is the Christmas that most of us know, but it’s a different story here in Anacostia. Most of the students we work with have no reason to look forward to Thanksgiving or Christmas. Imagine your Thanksgiving meal being dependent on someone else’s donation. Imagine never having received a Christmas gift. Imagine never having been able to afford a gift for a loved one. This is the reality for many of the students and families that we work with at The House DC.

Each year we are able to provide Christmas gifts for House students; and then a big idea began to bubble up from The House DC: With Christmas just around the corner, what could we do to demonstrate our love and commitment to all the students at Anacostia Senior High School? The answer seemed obvious: Give each student a gift! Great idea, but how on earth would that be possible? Enter Kim Arnold, president of Gen8, a healthy living advocacy non-profit. Thanks to our partnership with Kim, Gen8 was able to secure a donation of over 600 Bluetooth headphones, allowing us to give a highly sought-after gift for each student in Anacostia Senior High School and Kramer Middle School!

For the first time, these kids will experience the anticipation and excitement that most of us feel every year. But that’s not where it ends! Realizing that Christmas is about more than material gifts, The House, in partnership with Gen8, will put on a full Christmas concert, featuring a Gospel singer, choir music from some of The House’s students, and a presentation of the Gospel!

As our community hear this message, we pray that their hearts will be open to allowing Christ to impact their lives.

A SECURE THANKSGIVING

Each year The House DC hosts a Thanksgiving Appreciation Dinner for the administration and faculty at Anacostia Senior High School. This year, as usual, everyone was truly appreciative of being able to come right after school and have a delicious home cooked meal waiting for them. They were even more appreciative to have our youth serve the meal with such excellence and care, demonstrating how differently the students behave when involved with The House. It’s a powerful sight the teachers and administrators get to see, which reminds them their labor and ours is not in vain.

Former House students have come to enjoy this annual tradition so much that some of them still volunteer to help serve the meals or simply drop by to show their support. It’s always so exciting to see them and hear their inspiring updates.

This year, one former student shared her experience working in security at the World Bank, while another talked about working in security at a local high school. One of them proudly labeled herself and the other student “senior citizens” because they are now adults and much older than our current students. This is extremely significant because too many of the young people we serve do not see themselves lasting beyond the teen years or getting anywhere close to becoming a “senior citizen.” On top of that, so many of them are misunderstood and mislabeled by those who would have sadly expected to call security on them before expecting to find them proudly employed in the security field.
A “UNIQUE” STORY

Here at The House DC we strive to build healthy relationships with every student that walks through the door. Each relationship is unique and takes a different type of approach. Although each relationship requires attention, love, and dedication, every now and then we get those who require a little more. A lot of people have already written these types of students off, assuming that they will never change or just grow to become worse.

House DC student Ahmaad, nickname “Unique”, was at the doors of The House even before he was old enough to attend. The House Staff often caught him trying to sneak in. Although he didn’t yet meet the age requirements to be a House DC student, he was still given dinner every night.

When he became an official House DC student, he was one of our toughest students. Unique considered himself a Muslim and has been a prominent leader and a negative influence within his group. He has been challenging for The House staff to work with, especially Arts & Music Director, Chris Chiles.

At our Father’s Day Dinner/Life Session, the students were asked to invite their father or a father figure. On the day of the event, the students showed up alone. Unique shared that the last time he saw his dad was when he was around six years old. He said that The House DC male staff were the only father figures he had.

As of this school year, Unique is a senior and focused on graduating. Every staff member has seen a positive change in Unique including Chris. He’s at The House every day the doors are open, often trying to enforce rules to younger House DC students, bragging about his rising grades and not missing a meal!

For Unique, this is just the very beginning of a brand new life. He knows that his House DC family is rooting him on. Instead of disrupting prayers, Unique now prays in the name of Jesus.

NATIONALS—THE HOUSE DC’S HOME TEAM

The Washington Nationals have made The House DC the official Faith and Family Night partner. This past August was our second year being highlighted. Leading up to this special day, $5 from each ticket bought through the Faith and Family Night webpage was donated to The House. We connected with several churches in the area and thanks to their congregations, The House DC received $6,000 from ticket sales alone.

Thanks to McLean Bible Church’s sponsorship, The House DC’s new video was shown on the jumbotron. La Wonda Bornstein was interviewed on the field to share the mission and impact that The House DC has had in Anacostia for the past 17 years.

In addition, The House received a $15,000 grant from the Nat’s foundation, which included a special invitation to receive the award right out on the field prior to the game. The Nats have become big fans of The House DC and it is a tremendous honor to have the home team of the nation’s capital treating The House DC like their home team.
GOLF TOURNAMENT

On October 6th, The House DC hosted its 17th annual golf tournament at The Whiskey Creek Golf Club near Frederick, Maryland. Because of the generosity of our sponsors and attendees, we were able to raise almost $50,000 in a single day! It was a beautiful day and we had almost 60 golfers playing in support of The House DC. Thank you to the golfers and sponsors who made this special day possible, especially Ed Tarbutton, George Dunn and John Yetman!

17th Annual Golf Tournament
Supporting the Youth of the Nation’s Capital

George Dunn

First Trust Portfolios • John Yetman • Pointer Management
Richard Schacht • Robert McDonald • Steve Harvey
TCW/MetWest Asset Management

Steve Harvey
ANTJUAN – THE DIFFERENCE A FAMILY MAKES

Encouraged to visit The House DC by his cousin, Antjuan quickly got connected. House staff immediately saw incredible potential in Antjuan. Helping foster his entrepreneurial spirit, he connected with Chris Chiles, a House staffer who DJs on the side, to learn how to mix music. Antjuan was also introduced to a photographer who would teach him how to photograph events. Immediately after making these connections, Antjuan took the initiative to print his own business cards. He even started seeking out—and booking—DJ and photography opportunities for himself!

This kind of entrepreneurial spirit is not uncommon in a place like Anacostia. The tragedy is that it’s much more common for it to manifest itself in the form of selling drugs, rather than through constructive activities such as a trade or a small business.

For the past several years while Antjuan had been in high school, he’s been working with Executive Director of the Life Skills Education Center, Jonathan Harris to challenge his thinking around entrepreneurship ultimately giving him an inside look at how businesses are run. This consistent mentoring will help him make an easy transition from high school to developing a specific vision for his future.

Looking at the challenges facing Antjuan and many others in Anacostia, we have begun focusing attention on the needs of individuals aged 17 to 35, helping these individuals find paths to success that match with their specific goals, talents and interests. This is why we have established our newest ministry: The Life Skills Program. It will provide one-on-one mentorship and accountability for men and women who are past high school age.

Seeing his potential, Antjuan’s family is equally as determined that he will succeed. They are extremely supportive of his involvement with The House DC. Surrounded by his House DC family as well, Antjuan is setting off in a new direction, pursuing opportunities that fit his talents and abilities.

OPENING DAY - COSTUME PARTY

Every year when we open our doors to the students of Anacostia, we have a neighborhood kickoff party to get everyone excited about participating in The House’s programs all year, and to announce our theme for the year. This party is incredibly important because it introduces a brand new group of students to The House, and shows them that The House DC is safe, fun, and that the people working here care and understand them.

To introduce this year’s theme, The House staff rewrote the lyrics to DJ Khaled’s hit “I Got the Keys,” and even recreated the entire music video! As soon as the first note from the song started playing at the viewing party, the entire room of 150+ students erupted. The video was a huge success and got the conversation started about understanding the difference between having the keys to riches and power on earth versus living a life focused on eternal riches in Heaven.

This year’s Fall Party would not have been possible without the generous support of Zion Church. For the past several years, Zion Church as graciously sponsored the Fall Party, in addition to their regular support of The House DC. Zion understands the impact of this opening day, as well as the impact of The House’s ministry, and has been an invaluable partner with us. Thank you!
POVERTY

Is poverty really “cyclical?” In America’s (generally) free market economy don’t we all have access to the tools necessary to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and escape poverty? Doesn’t it just require a good work ethic and a little talent? “My grandpa did it” you might hear.

That is the mentality of many who do not realize the complex layers of cyclical poverty. While many Americans successfully break free from the bondage of poverty, others simply do not have access to the tools necessary to escape poverty, no matter how much gritty effort they put into it.

The cycle of poverty stems from more than a lack of money. It is multi-faceted issue caused by a host of absences, especially the absence of educational and spiritual foundation. Many of us take for granted the robust churches, fully resourced schools, and healthy tight-knit families and communities that surrounded and grounded us.

Without educational and spiritual formation, it’s nearly impossible to discern where to begin to ascend up and out of brutal, neglected communities where a paralyzing sense of hopelessness festers generation after generation. Growing up with very few choices and too few voices engraining the importance of spiritual and family values or the connection between education and employment leaves students with little hope for a future outside of the streets, and the cycle perpetuates itself.

Cyclical poverty, also known as generational poverty, is nothing new. In fact, the Scriptures, cognizant of its grave reality, had strict rules for preventing it. Every forty-nine years, the Jewish people celebrated the Jubilee Year, as instructed in Leviticus. This year was to consist of forgiving debts, releasing the imprisoned, freeing slaves, and enjoying an intense manifestation of God’s mercy (Leviticus 25:8-13). The Jubilee Year was a time of freeing those locked in generational poverty and also a time of rejoicing.

The House DC celebrates a daily Jubilee. We are constantly re-adjusting our students’ sights, hoping to make a small dent in the vicious cycle of generational poverty. Through mentorship, discipline, and personal example, we aim to be the spark that inspires our students to reach for the higher things of this life; to reject the pervading sense of hopelessness that affects so much of this community; to recognize that there is something bigger and better for them outside the streets; and ultimately, to know that God has created them not to live from welfare check to welfare check, or even paycheck to paycheck, but to enjoy a fulfilling life of freedom that He desires for each one of us.

Written by our Summer Intern, Luke Ungarino

Contributing Writers:
Peter Buckingham
Andrea Counts
Karen Curry
Britney Smith