

the Word on the House

Community House News

The House is having it's 9th Annual Golf Tournament at Whiskey Creek, September 17, 2008.

All proceeds go to support programs of The House. Contact Jeff Palmucci at 703-585-6070.

Welcome, Jo Agee, Business Manager.

Jo is responsible for office management, bookkeeping, and assisting the Executive Director.

Goodbye to Jada Jackson, Director of Operations.

Jada just completed her Masters at Capital Bible Seminary, and will be moving to Texas in August. Thank you Jada for your service, support, guidance, and wisdom. We wish you all the best!

Prom Night

House staff chauffeured students at Prom Night. You would have thought it was a "Red Carpet Event" when students came out of The House after dressing for the big night. Thank you so much to one of our donors, Debbie Jankura for providing the makeup and accessories for our girls. Adults in the neighborhood were so proud to see the students all dressed up and said "this is not just another prom night, this is a life changing moment for us." "I don't want this night to ever end, this is the highlight of the year for our family." If it wasn't for The House I don't know what we would have done, I could have never done this on my own."



La Wonda Harris Executive Director
Josephine Agee Business Manager
Warren Smith Youth Minister
Andrea Counts Program Manager
Jonathan Harris Academics & Life Skills



Changed Lives on Murder Row

The Vision of The House is to transform and empower the lives of inner city youth and their families through Christ, by giving them hope, a productive future, and a changed community. This past June, on the corner of 17th & Q, Steve Fitzhugh, Co-Founder & Chief Visionary,



STEVE FITZHUGH

gave a moving personal testimony to a crowd of people at our second annual House Community Day. Steve captivated the audience and challenged them to "get real with their lives and to get real with Jesus." His testimony ended with a call to Christ. We were humbled and moved to see dozens of people raise their hand to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior on what used to be called Murder Row by the local police.

The streets were blocked off and overflowing with Anacostia residents who came out to participate in The House's annual event. The day was packed with fun-filled activities for residents of all ages. In addition to a giant moon bounce, neighborhood kids were treated to a very special visit from Sesame Street's Elmo. We have to admit that Elmo was quite a hit with the high-school students too!

Throughout the day, The House grill provided delicious hamburgers & hotdogs for everyone to eat. Residents enjoyed the live entertainment provided by various bands that performed, such as: the Anacostia SHS Marching Band, Agape, Peculiar People, and our very own House student band "Unleashed," which was managed by House staff, Nathaniel Harris. In addition, everyone was touched by a powerful and creative mimed performance from Reconciliation Community Church's Mime Ministry of Manassas, VA.

The Community Day is just another tool that we use to fulfill our mission of providing creative programs that connect youth to Christ.

Congratulations to our Valedictorian

Congratulations to House student Erica, who has been selected as the 2007/2008 Valedictorian of Anacostia SHS. If you haven't noticed, Erica's name is consistently mentioned when we talk about House students who have achieved academic excellence. So, we were not surprised to learn that, in addition to being inducted into the school's National Honor Society, she is also this year's Valedictorian.

Erica is an amazing young woman and has been an active participant in The House's after-school program for the last three years. She is a focused and dedicated student, who attended summer and night school in order to graduate a year early. More importantly, Erica has a heart for God; and as a result, has overcome some very difficult, personal challenges.

Just last year, Erica was the victim of a drive-by shooting, along with another House student. Although the doctors were unable to remove the bullet lodged in her hip, for fear of causing more severe damage; Erica was released from the hospital and remained an honor roll student throughout a difficult physical and emotional recovery.



The House is extremely proud of Erica and her many accomplishments. We wish her the best as she embarks on what we know will be a bright future at Trinity University.

COMMITTED COUNTS



ANDREA COUNTS

As Executive Director, it never ceases to amaze me how committed The House staff is or the lengths they will go to reach the youth in Anacostia. But, as her last name indicates, when Program Manager Andrea Counts gets involved, I can always count on her to go the extra mile.

Recently, while visiting a House student who had been hospitalized, Andrea intervened in an altercation that had been brewing for some time between two young men from competing neighborhoods. When Andrea saw that both teens had friends positioned outside of the hospital, with the intent of causing physical harm to one another, she immediately stepped in and began to witness to the teens.

Andrea reminded the teens how valuable their lives were. She assured them both that God loved them, and that she loved them too. Not only did Andrea encourage the teens

to handle their "beef" God's way, she actually convinced them to send their friends home so that they could work things out without fear of retaliation. Andrea acted as a mediator that evening, offering to bring the teens together on neutral territory so that they could talk things through.

One week later, the teens were communicating via the Internet, assuring one another that the conflict had been resolved. Since that time, they have been in consistent contact with Andrea, seeking her counsel on various issues. They have developed a special bond with her. One of the teens even refers to her as his "Mother."

Because Andrea is always looking for a fresh and creative way to minister to our students, she cleverly used this experience as the topic for The House's next Life Session, which she aptly titled, "Stop Hatin!" During an open discussion with our youth, Andrea talked about how easy it is to take the wrong path. But, as she told the two teens at the hospital, it pleases God when we do things His way.

I can't stress enough how powerful this Life Session was. It truly made a dramatic impact on our students. We are convinced that it will help them to think twice before making a decision that could cost them their lives.

As the only youth center in this community for high-school aged youth, The House's mission is so critical! Intervention, support, and love continue to go a long way in preventing further actions or behavior that may lead to a long-term stay in our juvenile detention centers.

College Bound

We are thrilled to announce that half of the students inducted into the National Honor Society at Anacostia SHS this year were House students. Congratulations to Shannon, Erica, William, and Jenai.



JONATHAN HARRIS

This past April, our very own Jonathan Harris (Education & Life Skills Director) was nominated as the new Co-Chair for the Anacostia Senior High School Collaborative, which has over 25 community-based organizations who have come together to support the students, faculty, and parents. One of Jonathan's roles is to assist students with planning their futures and get them excited about the possibility of going to college.

It was just last October that Jonathan took a group of students on a college tour. House student William, was so excited that he went back to visit one of the schools on his own. He is now the recipient of a \$50,000 scholarship funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The good news doesn't stop here. This year marks a record number of college acceptances for House students. Acceptance letters have been received from George Mason University, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Edward Waters Junior College, Trinity University, and the University of the District of Columbia.

Jonathan says his goals at The House are to increase parental involvement; to increase retention of incoming Freshmen; to help House seniors make a smooth transition into post-graduate life; and finally, to build a positive rapport with the new leadership of Anacostia High School. It is with great anticipation that we look forward to updating our supporters about this Collaborative.

Connecting to God

Most of the youth we serve here at The House face significant emotional, spiritual, and economic challenges that many of us could not begin to fathom. So, it is always a rewarding experience when we can give these same students an opportunity to cast their cares aside and escape the severity of the inner-city. What better way to connect with God and His remarkable creation than to travel up to the mountains?

This past April, we embarked on our annual Spring Retreat at Summit Lake Camp, a Christian Conference and Retreat Center. We experienced our highest turnout.

Andrea Counts came up with this year's retreat theme, "Spring Fling," which symbolized the brief and often times destructive relationships that seem to plague today's youth. These meaningless relationships were used to draw a conflicting parallel to their relationship with God. During workshops and inspirational devotions, the staff stressed the importance of students not allowing their relationship with the Creator to become just another "spring fling."

Throughout the weekend, our youth were given opportunities to reflect on their individual, spiritual growth over the course of the year. They were also put to the test by participating in mentally and physically challenging, outdoor, team-building exercises. With each challenge, we gave the students the option to complete the task at-hand or to take the easy way out.

The purpose of these exercises was to demonstrate how walking with God can be equally challenging, especially when faced with trials. We also discussed how to avoid blaming God when things don't go our way.



WARREN SMITH (PAR LEFT) WITH HOUSE STUDENTS

By breaking the students into teams, under circumstances that forced them to work together, we were able to show how important it is for them to surround themselves with the body of Christ; receiving support from the people God strategically places in their lives. This is how we all make it through life's storms and claim victory!

Youth minister, Warren Smith challenged the staff to go deeper after the retreat. He developed a pamphlet that talked about "Four Pillars to a Healthy Relationship with God and Man." These topics: communication, love, trust, and forgiveness were presented each week at our Life Sessions with the youth.

The students have been amazed to see someone like Warren who is consistently positive and always has a great attitude. His character is an example of how God can change a life.

City Year

City Year is an organization that unites young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service, giving them skills and opportunities to change the world. And, that's exactly what we experienced when City Year's staff and volunteers donated 100 hours to transform The House's main building for our youth into a vibrant and welcoming center. They repainted the entire interior of our building, landscaped the outside, and painted murals on the walls. See a sample of colorful pictures below.

This work of art was just in time for our Community Day, where the neighbors were provided a tour, and City Year volunteers stayed to help us celebrate. Thank you so much City Year!



THE OUTSIDE HOUSE MURAL



LA WONDA HARRIS, ENJOYING COMMUNITY DAY WITH TWO ELMO FANS



RESIDENTS ENJOYING COMMUNITY DAY



FAMILY ROOM



MUSIC STUDIO



MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM