

the Word on the House

Community House News

The Washington Times Article, House Remakes Neighborhood

by Ken Starr on page 4.

The "Old School Invitational" Golf Tournament raised \$15,300 this past summer.

The tournament, run by John Atkinson, Kevin Pigott (partner at Womble Carlyle), and Justin Lay has supported The House since 2004. Kevin and Justin were interviewed by LEGAL BIZNOW (www.biznow.com) to promote the tournament; the article was featured in the May 4, 2009 edition. Our sincere thanks to the "Old School Invitational" for their continued support.

Many thanks to the volunteers whose indispensable help made our 10th Anniversary Celebration possible:

Gay Campbell, Audrey White and her team from CVS, Shirin Chase, Michelle McCamey, Nancy Halsey, Mark Shepherd manager of Party City, and Grace Brethren Church in Clinton, MD.



ERICA AND PAUL SINGING "HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD"

Staff from The House honored

the faculty and administration at Anacostia Senior High School at The House's annual Thanksgiving teacher appreciation dinner on November 23. Thanks to Beverly and Smitty Durham again this year for a wonderful dinner.

A sincere thanks to all who have supported The House in 2009, and over the past 10 years!

Movie Review, The Blind Side starring Sandra Bullock on page 8.

BECOMING VICTORS, NOT VICTIMS

Ten years in Anacostia has made a remarkable difference at the corner of 17th and Q Streets in Southeast DC. Students (current and former), all the founders, and supporters of The House celebrated ten years in Anacostia at a 10th Anniversary Celebration November 7 at the McLean Hilton in Tyson's Corner. The program included a look back at history and achievements, as well as future goals for this vital ministry.

Keynote speaker Rickey Bolden, a founder of The House and Senior Pastor of New Community Church in Georgia, emphasized that the work of The House has been—and will continue to focus on creating victors—not victims. Students of The House cling to this premise through this year's programming theme "Off the Chain," breaking the cycle of circumstances to become victors, not victims.

Steve Fitzhugh, another founder, served as MC for the evening. Our college students, a bright and hopeful presence, introduced themselves giving their names and the name of the school they are attending. Two students provided wonderful musical entertainment as well. Lon Solomon, a founder of The House and Senior Pastor of McLean Bible Church, spoke about the journey of The House over the last 10 years, the positive changes, the renovation of our third building and a desire to own the whole block. As a surprise "gift" in honor of the founders, current House students, demonstrating unexpected dramatic abilities, performed in a video skit in which they reenacted the beginning of The House, playing the parts of Rickey, Steve, Lon, Ron Johnson and Dick Schacht.

Looking back, we are proud of the achievements of our students, which are real and substantial. And we are grateful for the blessings on ministry bringing Christ into the lives of youth. It is the presence of God that sustains The House and the reality of Christ's love that has transformed the lives of youth, turning them from the destructive choices that confront them to choices based on faith and hope.



ANDREA COUNTS AND THE HOUSE DC STUDENTS

Chris Chiles	Program Specialist
Andrea Counts	Program Director
Nancy Halsey	Development Director
La Wonda Harris	President
Jonathan Harris	Life Skills & Academics Coach
Janis Perry	Volunteer Recruitment Manager
Warren Smith	Youth Pastor
JT Thompson	Music Production Engineer



Seeking God at

Fellowship, fun, and faith activities created rich experiences for students at The House's October retreat at Covenant Village Camp. The retreat took place over Halloween weekend and the first night involved a "faith" walk through a "haunted" barn. The students had to walk on an unknown path, to a barn on a cold dark night. To negotiate the path, they had to trust in their leaders. They were reminded that even when we can't see beyond our next steps, God is still in control, preparing us for something and caring for us in the midst of difficulties.

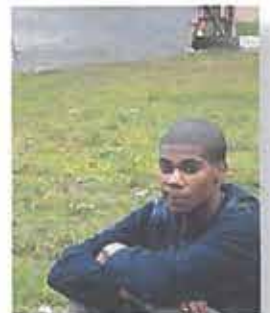
A challenging mountain hike on Saturday provided valuable life lessons. The students were allowed to choose one of two options, they easy or the tough climb. They tough climb was presented as something that might challenge the students to the limits of their physical capability. None of the students chose the easy way. They focused their energies on the hike, giving it their all. It was challenging, but at the end the view was magnificent across the mountains.



Most of our students that attended the retreat have accepted Christ, but one student in particular had been struggling with his Muslim beliefs. With no father in his life, he has spent his young life on the street. "Tony" says he didn't come to The House much because it was a Christian organization. Last spring, after sneaking onto the bus to attend the spring retreat, he was caught and thrown off. This year, he did it the right way and signed up to attend. He had no idea that it would be a life changing experience. The first thing that started rugging at his heart was the Saturday morning devotion about Christ's love and what he did for us on the cross.

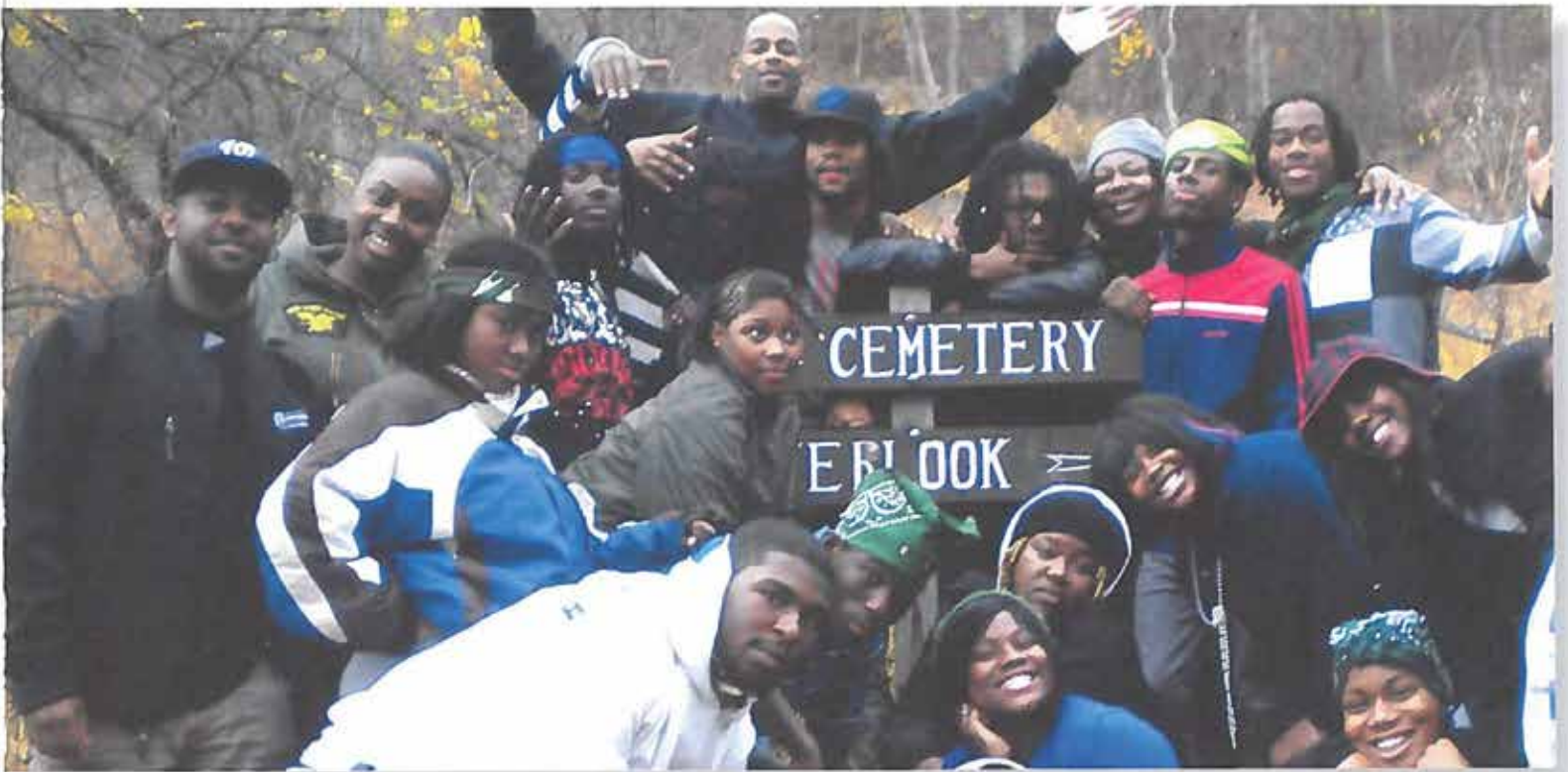
Other retreat activities during the weekend also challenged his thinking. At the end of the Sunday workshop he volunteered to pray. Tony not only prayed for his brother, but he thanked everyone for their support, forgiveness, and for the staff taking the time to help him find the truth. Tony accepted Christ into his life and says that now his heart is not the same.

Praise God for the opportunity once again for House students to experience him on the "mountaintop."



KEYWAY AT FALL RETREAT

the Fall Retreat



House Staff Visits College Students

The House staff surprised seven students attending Garrett College with a visit and dinner. The four freshmen and three sophomores talked about the successes and challenges of college life. Our visit was to encourage our students and to show them support and love. One student—raised by his grandfather who recently passed away and had to be cared for by a neighbor—was particularly excited. He felt like we were family coming to visit him. And that night, we were their moms, dads, aunts, and uncles. Another student was also excited to even be in college especially since they are the only one in their family to graduate from high school.

As the evening closed, all six staff shared a special encouragement to each student. We were even blessed to



SEVEN FORMER STUDENTS OF THE HOUSE WHO ARE ATTENDING GARRETT COLLEGE

hear from the restaurant manager that "it was a pleasure to see a group of young people who were obviously good kids," especially since in the past, we have heard people refer to our students as the "bad kids." We truly thank God for this chance to celebrate and encourage our college students.

CITIZEN JOURNALISM:

House remakes

Monday, November 9, 2009

America has far too many “at risk” neighborhoods. Anacostia, right here in the shadow of the Capitol, is one of them. However, such neighborhoods can become places of promise and opportunity instead of fear and violence.

An exciting engine of neighborhood — and individual — transformation is The House in Southeast Washington. Opened 10 years ago this month, the House DC offers a remarkably successful after-school program carried out in an unlikely location — in three former crack houses on a troubled street once dubbed “Murder Row.” Now affectionately called “Life Row,” the hopeless street of the late 20th century has been transformed. Even more important, so have young lives.

Since its opening in November 1999, hundreds of young people have participated in a robust array of life-changing programs at The House, a safe place where every afternoon from Tuesday through Friday, 50 to 60

students — primarily from Anacostia High School, just one block away — come to hang out.

Educational statistics at The House speak volumes. Even as Anacostia High struggles with a tragic graduation rate of just 43 percent, 100 percent of high school seniors attending programs at The House have graduated in each of the past two years. Twenty of these alumni are attending college. The House’s academic and life-skills coach, Jonathan Harris, recognizes the background reality: “Retention is difficult with these students, and so we are especially proud that our students are not only going to college, but staying there.”

Who are these kids? Many of them are tough, but like all teenagers, they need to be showered with love and directed with wise guidance. Many have been involved with school truancy and juvenile court. Many are victims of parental abandonment, abuse of various kinds, neighborhood violence and the drug culture. Many

have had a sacred trust broken by adults. For many of the students who enter the House, the relationships they encounter there offer the most stable and homelike experiences in their lives.

On entering The House, students are met by trained staff members, all of whom are caring adults who connect with the students “where they are.” Healthy relationships form based on honesty, trust, courtesy, caring and treating everyone with basic dignity. Students walk into a game room where generous donors have provided a weight room, a big-screen TV, pool tables and (healthy) video games. According to program manager Andrea Counts, “This is where a lot of relationships happen.”

Upstairs, dinner is served every night. A family time is held when staff and students sit down with each other. For many students, this is the most consistent nourishment — physical and emotional — they have each week.

s neighborhood

Ken Starr SPECIAL TO *THE WASHINGTON TIMES*

Music thrives. With guidance from sound engineer J.T. Thompson, a professional musician, the upstairs recording studio hums with original raps and songs composed by the students. At this nerve center, students use state-of-the-art sound equipment to express emotions and develop skills. One alumnus of the House is earning high grades at the Art Institute of Washington; another recently appeared on a nationally televised anti-smoking ad produced by the American Lung Association. The House is a place where homework gets done. In the upstairs computer lab, students explore the Internet with supervision.

Academic coach Harris not only oversees homework assignments but helps students chart their course through high school, to set goals and then achieve them. When problems arise, Mr. Harris is there as a mentor and mediator. He is a familiar presence — and welcome ally — to the administration and staff at Anacostia.

Unabashedly faith-based, The House's philosophy and worldview reflect a deep spiritual commitment. All are welcome, regardless of faith walk (or lack of one), but once a week, youth pastor Warren Smith offers Life Sessions, voluntary Bible studies designed to help students come to a deeper understanding of the life issues confronting them. One student recalls that he attended programs for two years before finally attending Life Sessions. He says he has since come to a belief in God and been baptized.

As President La Wonda Harris says, "These wonderful students' lives have meaning, and we share that hope with them — the hope that God loves them and has a purpose for them."

Success stories abound. One teen mom had dropped out of school and simply given up. She had no father in her life, her mother was on drugs, and an abusive boyfriend was living in the home. The House gave her, in

her own words, "hope beyond imagination." She has gone on to earn her high school diploma and become a certified chef with a stable job in a great restaurant in Washington. She is raising her child in a loving and supportive environment. She speaks powerfully of her life-changing experience: "I thought it was over for me. I wanted it to be over for me. But because The House didn't give up on me, I will never give up on myself or my child."

Too many neighborhoods in America will remain at risk, but The House has a proven, faith-based formula for transformation — one young life at a time. For 10 years, it has served as a lighthouse for many of Southeast Washington's at-risk youth. Happy anniversary, and many happy returns to a program that works — and works well.

—Ken Starr is dean of the Pepperdine University School of Law and has served on the advisory board of the House since its inception 10 years ago.

Church Partners Bring Strength

From before the day when The House first opened its doors in November 1999, McLean Bible Church has been an important church partner for The House. Pastor Lon Solomon and members Ron Johnson and Dick Schacht are founders of The House along with Rickey Bolden and Steve Fitzhugh. Others, including Frank Cofer, Marty Granger, Greg Holmes, Jeff Palmucci, and Dale Steinhauer, have provided invaluable assistance and support since the early years. Members from MBC continue to fill important roles on our Board of Directors and they encourage and support our ministry.

The House has now been blessed with another church partner that has also made a financial commitment. We met Darrell Townsend, Evangelism and Outreach Pastor of Zion Church in Bowie, Maryland, when The House Life Skills and Academics Coach, Jonathan Harris (a Deacon at Zion Church) invited Pastor Darrell to have lunch with our staff members who attended the Willow Creek Leadership Summit in August. Zion was seeking a group with which to partner in the inner city in an effort to expand the reach of its ministry. Pastor Darrell asked many questions about our work. In July, Jonathan Harris, Nancy Halsey, Development Director; and Steve Fitzhugh, Co founder made a presentation to Board members. Zion

Church decided in October to partner with The House. We are confident that our partnership with Zion Church will bear good fruit.

We are excited to expand our base of church support, because in unity is strength. At The House we work on the front lines to bring Christ to the community of Anacostia. The support from our Christian brothers and sisters that is represented by church partnerships strengthens the effectiveness of our ministry. We welcome the opportunity to create a network of support from Christian churches.



DARRELL TOWNSEND



LOAN SOLOMON

A Changed Life

I never wanted to go to school because I hated it. It was easier to just hang out with my friends.

We all participated in dangerous behaviors. A lot of people called us a gang and I guess that was true. Home shouldn't feel the way mine did. There was no peace, no love, no father, only sadness so I didn't want to be there.

Last year I started coming to the House and I came with my usual carefree and suicidal attitude. The studio lured me in with cool equipment, and I couldn't pass up free dinner every night. Even though the staff was nice and I liked being there, I was always getting into trouble. They said I couldn't come back unless I changed my behavior.

That seemed like the end of the line for me. I didn't realize it, but a change was occurring in me and suddenly the things I used to do with my friends felt uncomfortable. There was something different about the people at The House. When they talked about how God changed their lives I really believed it.

When The House opened this fall I asked to return and they welcomed me. The House feels more like what my home should have felt like. They became my family and also helps me with school, and because of them, I made honor roll for the first time. I want to go to college next year. I also tried out for the football team and made it!

I love the studio and I recorded a rap, here's a line from one of the verses: "Lord help me again cause I'm asking...when I found God, things started happening. Now I know that he forgives me, because I asked Him." I'm so glad that God changed my life. Thanks.—John

PBS's *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly* Features

Guests at the 10th Anniversary Celebration on November 7 may have noticed reporters and photographers scurrying around the edges of the gathering, recording the event. They were part of a crew from the PBS television show *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly*, which is planning to air a segment about The House, in mid-late December. During the week following the Celebration, the Producer Phil O'Connor and his crew continued working at The House and in Anacostia, capturing our programs in session, interviewing students and staff, and filming the Anacostia neighborhood.

The TV crew was moved by what they witnessed at The House. They worked conscientiously to convey the reality and power of what happens in our work and in the lives of our students, including the importance and centrality of faith in our ministry.

Religion & Ethics Newsweekly airs in the Washington, DC area on PBS Sunday mornings: WHUT 9:00 am, WETA at 10:30, WMPT at 11:30. It offers thoughtful presentations about faith in various aspects and activities of life, in a way that is respectful of the power and validity of the faith experience. Once the segment airs it will be available online at www.pbs.org/religion under the title The House. As their taping came to a close Lucky Severson, Contributing Correspondent said "it's nice to work on something you can believe in."



GOLF FOR A WORTHY CAUSE

Golfers gathered on Wednesday, September 23 for The House DC's annual golf tournament. The tournament has been held at Whiskey Creek Golf Course for the last seven years. The condition of the course was absolutely beautiful.

This year's tournament, organized by Dick Schacht, was a successful event. Golfers enjoyed the opportunity to play for a worthy cause. Even without the lead time necessary to organize a larger event, this year again there were new sponsors, and several events were purchased by sponsors for groups who will be able to play at well-known area courses within the next 12 months: Trump National, the Congressional Blue course (where the U.S. National Open will be played), and Avenel.

Overall winners of the tournament were guests of John Yetman and Adam Goddard's consulting business at Smith-Barney. There were other prizes as well: for the longest drive, for the shot landing closest to the pin on the par three holes, and for the putting contest. After golfing, everyone enjoyed a terrific lunch.

We appreciate the volunteers who helped and special thanks to first year volunteer Ed Tarbutton from Smith-Barney. We are grateful for the support

from generous donors and our tournament sponsor, George Dunn who made the tournament a fundraising success for The House.

Mark your calendar for next year's fund-raising golf event on September 22, 2010 at Whiskey Creek.



BOB McDONALD, DICK SCHACHT, AND ED TARBUTTON

The House DC 10 YEAR Anniversary CELEBRATION



HOUSE STUDENT TANICKA SMITH, VOLUNTEERS CAROLINE AND KATE CAMPBELL



JT THOMPSON AND SON WITH HOUSE STUDENTS



GREG AND TERI HOLMES, RICKEY BOLDEN, STEVE AND JENNIFER CASSELL



WARREN SMITH AND JONATHAN HARRIS



DICK SCHACHT, STEVE FITZHUGH, LA WONDA HARRIS, RON JOHNSON, AND RICKEY BOLDEN



NANCY HALSEY AND KATE WALL

Movie Review: My son and I went to see *The Blind Side*, starring Sandra Bullock. He said it was the best movie he had seen all year. We laughed about certain parts played by Sandra Bullock. But Mike's story as a youth was sad. It reminded me of the youth we serve in Southeast. However, through it all, Mike had people in his life that cared, and as a result the movie ended with positive life changes. Our youth also have people who care: staff, volunteers, and donors, and many also experience positive life changes because of the support they receive. If you are a movie goer it's worth seeing. **** —La Wonda Harris

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