Take Me All The Way

"I don't want to go through the motions, I don't want to go one more day without Your all consuming passion inside of me, I don't want to spend my whole life asking 'what if I had given everything instead of going through the motions', take me all the way."

Gospel recording artist Michael West wrote and recorded this song that pierces my heart. Titled, "The Motions", every time I hear the words, I am convicted to make sure my heart is 100% committed to The House ministry. We are so fortunate to have a small, dedicated staff who live this out daily. The photo below of Andrea Counts with one of our students, is a reflection of God's consuming passion inside of her.

The House serves a community with many needs including poverty, homelessness and unemployment. While we have several programs that help students with many needs, the heart of The House is ministry and genuine relationships. And ministry can be messy. Poverty hits you right in the face, and lives are truly at stake.

As you are planning for 2013, please include us in your plans and make a financial contribution to The House. We need your continued support and encourage you to share our story with your family and friends. Help us to take our mission all the way in 2013.

Sincerely,
La Wonda Bornstein
President & CEO

The House DC
PO Box 30958
Washington, DC 20030
Phone: (202) 610-3100
www.thehousedc.org
Opening Day  GRILL IT and THEY WILL COME!

The House staff fired up the grill for the Opening Day barbecue and suddenly, it was as if smoke signals had beckoned the entire community. Students, parents, teachers, as well as neighborhood children and adults came out in force to enjoy the hamburger and hotdogs that were expertly grilled by Director of Audio Engineering & Music Production JT Thompson. JT is normally known for his prowess in the recording studio, but on this day he was mixing it up on the grill to the audience’s delight. Chick-fil-A also donated food and it seemed like a fish and loaves moment because no matter how large the crowd grew, the food never seemed to run out.

The House DC Opening Day has become a much-anticipated fall tradition in the community, and as always, many former House students made it a point to stop by and reconnect with friends and mentors. In reflecting on the day’s events La Wonda Bornstein remarked, “Our Opening Day celebrations are The House DC’s opportunity to say to our students and to the community, ‘we are here for you and our House is your house’. And, ‘we’ means all of us from the senior leadership to our support team. In fact, I got in on the action and worked with JT to help serve food; our maintenance staff, Henry helped out by making smoothies—which were a great hit; and Spiritual Life Director Chris Chiles served as our DJ. All of this literally in our own backyard! A few teachers told me how much they appreciate The House. I couldn’t begin to express to them how much I appreciate the opportunity to bring light and joy to them and to the community through the efforts of The House.”

Students whose birthdays were in July, August, and September were celebrated with birthday cakes and everyone joined in on the group games which included Family Feud, complete with music from the actual game show. Another game that was a hit was “In the House” a boys vs. girls competition involving questions that dealt with the word, “house.”

The House DC brought in 30 new students from the Opening Day celebration.
From Boys in the Hood to Hometown Heroes

Dominique came to The House DC as a believer in Christ, but faced a number of trials and obstacles that made it difficult to live out his faith. A lot of things weren’t going so well for Dominique, but regardless of what happened or didn’t happen in his life, the one thing that remained consistent for Dominique was The House DC. He faithfully attended The House where he was surrounded by encouragement from people who were living the faith they taught about. There were times when life became so overwhelming that Dominique wanted to give up. But, the mustard seed of faith within him just would not let him go. Something within him told him that God could make things better, and the voices of The House staff echoed that belief.

At one point, Dominique was in danger of failing high school. With the unwavering support of The House staff and his faith in God, he graduated. Outreach & Academic Director Jonathan Harris encourages and helps students to move on in their adult life after The House. He talks with them about colleges, trade schools, military careers, and job opportunities. He continued to talk with Dominique about doing something after high school. His dream was to be a marine. Dominique understood that God can do exceedingly abundantly above all we could ask or imagine. He walked into the recruiter’s office and... walked out a Marine! One look at him in his uniform and there is no doubt that this young boy from the “hood” had transformed into a true hometown hero and an ambassador for Christ!

Theodore is another over comer. Theodore was never part of the “in-crowd.” He didn’t really fit in anywhere until he came to The House. He knew about God but hadn’t given his life to Christ until The House staff helped him learn more about God’s plan for his life—plans for a future and hope.

The more Theodore hung out at The House, the more he began to open up and become more confident. It wasn’t long before Theodore—whose name means lover of God—learned to truly love God, others and himself. Standing solidly on the foundation of God’s love, Theodore transformed from a quiet, withdrawn loner to a proud, brave firefighter eager to serve his community.

below: Dominique in his Marine uniform
right: Future Hometown Heros
This past summer, a team of McLean Bible Church (MBC) volunteers led by John Konisiewicz rolled up their sleeves and cleaned, sorted, unpacked and “unstacked” mounds of furniture and supplies at Anacostia High School. Their efforts were part of MBC’s DC Schools Project, a mission blitz in which hundreds of MBC volunteers were dispatched to schools throughout the Washington, DC metro area to help prepare the schools for opening day.

Leaving the comfortable surroundings of the suburbs to lend a helping hand to an inner city school exposed John to a level of need that left a lasting impression on him. On the way to Anacostia he recalled passing a church in which people in need of food formed a line that by 7am was already wrapped around the block. He also reflected on helping to set up the furniture and sorting out materials for Anacostia’s teen pregnancy center, while yet trying to sort out in his heart and mind the fact that there was even a need for a pregnancy center in a high school.

“It’s interesting to see an entirely different area. Some of us are sheltered in the suburbs where things like poverty do exist, but are not necessarily as visible as in the city. Regardless of where we live, our faith calls us to reach out to the community and to share Christ in deed not just word. You can bark a lot about faith if you want to, but if there is no action to back it up, there’s no teeth to it... you’re not really living it,” said John.

John and his team spent most of their day providing direct support to the teachers by helping them prep their classrooms. They also washed stairwells and walls, and cleared debris left over from the new construction and renovations, some of which had just been completed while they were still at the school. The volunteers’ efforts were the finishing touch on the overall beautification efforts at the school, which involved an extensive reconstruction effort that was so impressive that many of the teachers were simply amazed when they walked in the building. What they saw was a far cry from the Anacostia High School they left earlier in the summer.

John concluded, “I was glad to be a part of this effort and would absolutely do it again. Making an impact and helping those who have less than others is doing what Christ told us to do. Only time will tell what kind of impact we made. We may never know the impact, but God knows. It was also great to provide support and encouragement to Principal and the teachers at Anacostia because every one of them is deeply committed and truly cares about the students. They want the best for their students, and they all deserve nothing less than the best.”
Fall Retreat Hits the Bull’s-eye with Fish Tales, Old School Games

The 2012 Fall retreat featured an action-packed weekend of activities centered on the theme, “Getting to Know You.” To really help the theme soak in, before boarding the van students were treated to an original recording of the classic song, “Getting to Know You”—yes, the one sung by Julie Andrews, a name completely unfamiliar to most young urban teens. The song was a blast from the distant past for the students and a hint that they were in store for plenty of old school fun and surprises at the retreat.

Just like the Julie Andrews song, most of the students bristled at the thought of playing “boring” games like tug-of-war that didn’t involve a headset, handset, or anything else electronic. But, one by one, they began to get into the games, helping each other out and building a spirit of camaraderie that enabled them to get to know their fellow students better and to know themselves better. Most of the students had no idea they would have so much fun actually playing games instead of watching the action on a screen.

Our retreats that are held in the spring and fall, allow our students an opportunity to leave the city and enjoy many different experiences in life. They are exposed to new activities and enjoy our traditional activities, while we build relationships with them in different settings. Students have said how much they enjoyed the retreats and look forward to them.

The retreat took place at Camp Letts, a YMCA camp in Edgewater, Maryland located—right on the edge of the water.

In this idyllic setting, the students were able to enjoy a variety of outdoor games such as archery and fishing. One student hit a bulls-eye in archery on her second shot. Another caught “the big one” when he went fishing on the lake. He begged to take home his prize catch but eventually agreed to return the fish to its domain and leave with a photo and indelible memories of his grand fishing expedition.

Leaving the familiar surroundings of home for new adventures can be quite disorienting for some students, but there was as special activity prepared to help counter that feeling. This year, the students participated in an Orienteering Session in which they were taught to use compasses to orient themselves in the woods in order to complete scavenger hunt activities.

The quest originally began as an individual activity but the students ended up forging teams when they realized that two heads (or three or four) were better than one. The first team to master the compasses and find the hidden items won a prize, and since the final clues led to the lunchroom, everyone else enjoyed a much-needed break and a good meal to top off their adventure.

What truly topped off the adventurous weekend was that three students gave their lives to Christ. The purpose of our retreats is to fulfill our mission: to connect youth to Christ through creative programs that meet both physical and spiritual needs.
Support for The House DC is Just Par for the Course...

The House celebrated its 13th annual Fall Golf Tournament with many returning players and faithful company sponsors such as Adam Goddard, Mike Toohey, Janjer Enterprises, Lynch Retirement Investment Group, Cassaday & Company and many others. A perennial favorite of many of our donors, the golf tournament has helped to raise approximately $650,000 in support of The House DC since its inception.

George Dunn and John Yetman have faithfully supported the tournament every year since the beginning by serving as co-chairs and sponsors, or hosting golf meetings and dinners at their homes. “George and John are a tremendous blessing to The House and we truly really appreciate them,” said La Wonda.

Three years ago, Ed Tarbutten started chairing the event and he has worked tirelessly to make sure the tournament is a success. Ed is a thoughtful and innovative leader. He has taken most of the tournament legwork from the staff so we can continue to focus on our student programs, which is where our energy is needed most.

Ed has increased sponsorship, negotiated contracts, and maintained relationships so that each year the tournament continues to be a great success. This year’s tournament raised $52,700 and thanks to La Wonda’s creative touch, it also featured a special incentive that the players and golf tournament site staff had never seen. This year, large posters with photographs of players from the previous year were posted at the holes. As the players went around and saw themselves in action from 2011, they were motivated to top [or redeem] themselves! Some players even took pictures of the pictures.

The golf tournaments are certainly a great picture of what it looks like when Jesus says it is more blessed to give than to receive. Everyone involved in the tournament—from chairpersons to sponsors to players—thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to lend their support to The House. The fact that they get to do so while enjoying camaraderie and friendly competition on the greens, is just par for the course.

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Top: Paul Roess, Chuck Chitty, Ed Tarbutten, George Dunn, & Rich Bailey
Bottom Left: Golfer taking a picture of Ed Tarbutten’s 2011 photo
Bottom Right: John Yetman
A “Reel” Changed Life

One sunny afternoon, Chris Chiles and some of The House students stepped outside to film a video he planned to use to enhance one of his upcoming “Bible” Life Sessions. A group of girls walked down the street during filming, and Chris noticed a glimmer of curiosity in their eyes. He introduced himself, told them about The House DC and offered them an opportunity to be included in the video. They accepted his offer, had a great time filming the video, and agreed to come back to see the completed project and take a tour of The House during the next Life Session.

Little did Chris know that one of those young ladies was struggling with personal issues. Sometimes, confusion led to her being bounced out of a place to stay and feeling completely rejected. Based on what she experienced, she doubted that God was real and felt that even if He was real He must not care about her to allow her to experience so much pain and rejection. Yet she continued coming to The House and attending Life Sessions in spite of her doubts—or perhaps drawn by them.

In time, her exposure to God’s Word began to do what only it can do. It began to reveal the truth about God, a truth she saw displayed before her in The House staff and in some of her fellow House students. She gave her life to Christ after being led by another student. Since giving her life to the Lord, she has been very teachable, open to learning more about the Lord, and can often be seen walking around with her Bible, reading and asking questions. Who would have imagined that the day she agreed to allow Chris to videotape her for his story it would eventually lead to the day she would allow Jesus Christ to rewrite her life story and give her love and stability far beyond anything she could ask or imagine. Her dramatic reel truly led to a dramatic, real change in her life.

Giving Thanks and Giving Back

Each Thanksgiving for about the last 10 years, The House DC has hosted a Thanksgiving meal at Anacostia High School. It has become a much-anticipated tradition at the school and a real holiday highlight. This year Andrea Counts cooked the entire meal.

This is a time when House DC staff and students honor and encourage Anacostia faculty and staff. The meal is a great way for House students to give back some of the inspiration and support they have received from their school. House students set up, clean up, and serve the dinners. They also serve words of appreciation right along with the meal through various tributes, testimonials or original poems. The teachers are often pleasantly surprised to see students they would have least expected serving and sharing words of thanks.
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT—Helping Hands

Volunteers are a critical part of The House DC’s support network and a special part of what helps make The House feel like home. Whenever the right set of volunteer skills comes together with The House’s ministry needs, it is truly a gift from Heaven.

Pete and Susan Jackson are excellent examples of God-sent gifts to The House DC. They, along with their neighbor Peggy, graciously provide meals to The House students twice a month. Even their teenage son, Garrett, gets involved, helping to make cookies and working behind the scenes.

Every other Tuesday, Pete & Susan arrive on the doorstep of The House DC with a full meal in tow, including dessert. Their bi-weekly visits are a welcome sight not only because they provide a break for The House staff and students who normally prepare the meals, but also because every meal, including the dessert, is entirely homemade!

The Jacksons travel all the way from Great Falls, Virginia to make their special delivery to The House. They are enthusiastic about their mission and neither the traffic nor the distance they travel dampens their excitement and commitment to carrying out their special delivery. Pete was introduced to The House by Guy Speers, Chairman of the Board. Pete toured The House with La Wonda & Guy, and after their tour, Pete’s heart was so stirred that he immediately sat down to brainstorm about ways he could help. Realizing that food was a major ongoing need, Pete decided that providing home-cooked dinners would not only help the students have a good meal, but would also enable the staff to get a break from the kitchen to spend more time with students. Plus, with their neighbor Peggy on board, they had a professional restauranteur on their side!

Last Christmas, Peggy had an opportunity to really showcase her skills and gift of hospitality. She offered to prepare Christmas lunch for The House staff at her house. The staff was completely blown away by the beautiful, cozy setting and the artfully displayed, incredibly delicious food. It was far more than any restaurant would have offered. The House staff and students are forever thankful for their special deliveries, which are always delivered with one extra special ingredient—Love.

The Battle is not Yours

“The old spiritual song titled ‘The Battle is Not Yours’ reminds me of one of students named Shanae,” said La Wonda. From the time Shanae came to The House it was a battle. Andrea Counts met with Shanae and discovered that she was a runaway who used drugs, was involved in prostitution, and had been arrested.

Andrea would spend several years building a relationship with Shanae, loving her unconditionally, working with her mom, and ensuring that she had a safe place to stay. Over the years staff would not hear from Shanae and just prayed for her safety.

Shanae had accepted Christ while at The House and even got baptized. However, she continued to struggle. With consistent support and love from staff, and recognizing that the one love that she could always count on is the love of Jesus Christ, Shanee finally turned her battle over to the Lord. She recognized that she needed to do life differently and needed help.

Today Shanee has a different attitude. She is determined to graduate from high school (attending night school), living with her mom, and now helping others. She contacted Andrea about helping a few people find a place to live, and even keeps up with how they are doing in school.

Many people ask us how we measure our success. It is one life at a time being transformed like Shanee. We understand that “there is no hurt He cannot heal and no sadness that He cannot heal, for the battle is not yours, it’s the Lord’s.”