



NEWS FROM

**THE HOUSE DC**

Breaking Cycles | Building Futures

Winter 2020



Frank Diorio, DaVon, & Jonathan Harris

## RACIAL UNITY: A PATH FORWARD

When you truly care, you want to do something tangible. And that's what *Racial Unity—A Path Forward* is about.

In the midst of the pandemic, national conversations have been sparked about racial unity/reconciliation, and it's been great to see many churches and groups participating in this discussion. But what happens when it's all talk?

In the throes of this national awakening, we need to continually challenge ourselves to understand how we can best meet the needs of underprivileged Black communities around us. How can we ensure that our conversations and prayer retreats inspire us into action? How do we even figure out where to direct that action? That's where The House DC comes in.

A *Path Forward* marries discussions on racial reconciliation with opportunities to provide aid to underserved Black communities. Our program provides necessities for families in need and connects donors with some of our community's rising stars.

One of our donors was moved by a young man without parents, who, in the midst of caring for his siblings, produced a rap song about his life through The House DC studio. The donor anonymously sponsored the young man until they recently met up for lunch. Our student felt encouraged and inspired to know that it's more than The House DC staff that cares, others do as well. He left lunch feeling an extra sense of hope!

Other participants in the *Path Forward* discussions have supported a variety of specific needs, from providing diapers, baby clothes, and baby furniture to connecting The House DC with a non-profit attorney that provided us with critical legal support.

If you desire to go beyond conversations into meaningful action, contact: [action@thehousedc.org](mailto:action@thehousedc.org).

## Issue Highlights:



Supplies for the Soul



The House DC Is on a Roll



Party On!



Building New Cycles



Running Virtually Anywhere



## SUPPLIES FOR THE SOUL

Outside The House DC on Sundays, our staff organizes what must appear to an outside observer like our own little farmer's market. We set up tables full of fresh organic groceries next to spreads of clothing, toiletries, baby diapers, and other necessities. We arrange stacks of new books starring Black superheroes and other stories where Black children can see themselves as positive characters. The smell of fresh flowers lingers in the air...

These Sunday markets are not just about providing basic necessities to a struggling community. They are also about dignity, joy, and fellowship. Fresh flowers may seem relatively mundane to some, but to impoverished households, they can carry extraordinary

significance. Unwilted organic produce and nutritious packaged meals can help restore a semblance of sovereignty when life feels out of control. High-end healthy meals contribute to healthier bodies and minds for everyone from seniors to students. They also communicate that the residents deserve the best.

Consider what these small luxuries can do for the soul. Consider what it means when one of our neighbors tells us that he feels like he won the lottery after picking up household goods, or when a grandmother who is missing a wheel on her walker happily walks several blocks to pick up fresh groceries for her family. (We were recently able to deliver a new walker to her home!)

This is the kind of soul-restoring work we do day after day. This is the kind of work you are supporting when you donate to The House DC.



**Ayana Smith**  
Program & Operations Assistant

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Cycles are broken and new futures are built through diligence, hard work, and dedication. Ayana Smith, a former House DC student and current employee, embodies all three of these elements.

Even on the most difficult of days (and Lord knows we've had a few!), Ayana dives right into every challenge, expertly fielding every flyball lobbed her way.

Ayana's talents and flexibility have spread light throughout the entire organization and greater community. She connects deeply with our students, improving our ministry and life skills programs with a constant stream of fresh and creative approaches. You can catch her on Sundays at The House DC serving free, fresh, organic groceries to all who need them!

Along with her strong work ethic and the hours she spends at The House DC, Ayana is an awesome mother to a beautiful daughter, Anaya, and she is currently finishing her Master's Degree!

We are so grateful to have Ayana as a part of our House DC family. Thank you, Ayana, for all you do! You are a true blessing to us all.

# PARTY ON!



Program Director, Britney Smith making deliveries

The House DC was not about to let a pandemic stop us from ushering in the new school year with excitement and celebration!

We typically mark the start of each school year with a big Back-to-School party. But this year, instead of hosting our students at The House DC, we met them at their own houses! Our staff spent a full day running through the community to knock on each student's

door and greet them with a beautiful basket of snacks, books, hand sanitizer, masks, and other treats. Each parent/caregiver also received a Visa gift card to help with their expenses.

The pandemic has forced us to get creative—but we love finding new ways to ensure that our youth and their families are taken care of. Ringing doorbells and meeting our friends with smiles and gifts doesn't solve all our problems, but it shows our community that someone sees

“ The House DC is always blessing me and my family. We love you guys and we can't thank you enough!

— Parent ”

them and cares about what they're going through. Even small surprises can sprinkle hope. We want to be a reminder that God hasn't forgotten about his children in Anacostia.

This year's opening day was a day to remember. The fact that there was no party inside our building had no effect on the joy we and our students felt inside our hearts, and The House DC was still able to deliver genuine love to each of our students and their families.

---

# THE HOUSE DC IS ON A ROLL

Armed with masks and Lysol wipes, House DC staff and a small group of students rolled into the bowling alley for an evening of pizza, wings, and friendly (if occasionally fierce!) competition.

It was a relief to let loose for an evening. In this tumultuous period, it can be difficult to keep up morale and stay connected to our support systems. And, there's just something satisfying and cathartic about crashing heavy balls into a bunch of pins—it's the truth, we don't make the rules!

House outings are so much more than just opportunities to joke around or enjoy rewards for good behavior. We take our youth on outings to help them escape their pain for a while. These hours spent away from their neighborhoods are rare moments of peace, escape and hope. In a community full of chaos, peace is elusive, and hope is life-giving.

Lashay, one of the students from the trip, was especially in need of some peace. Lashay lives in one of the most violent apartment complexes in Anacostia. She told us that if she wasn't having fun with us, she'd be sitting at home listening to gunshots and sirens.

“Rolling the heavy bowling ball into the pins is like releasing the heavy weight off my shoulders!” she said.

We understand that our teens carry heavier loads than any child should have to bear, and sometimes they desperately need moments to just be teens. They need nights where they can eat as much pizza and wings as they can stomach without having to worry about how much it costs. It is important to us that our youth aren't neglected—even in the middle of a pandemic. We are blessed to be able to serve our students and continue to create these moments of peace.



## SPECIAL DELIVERIES

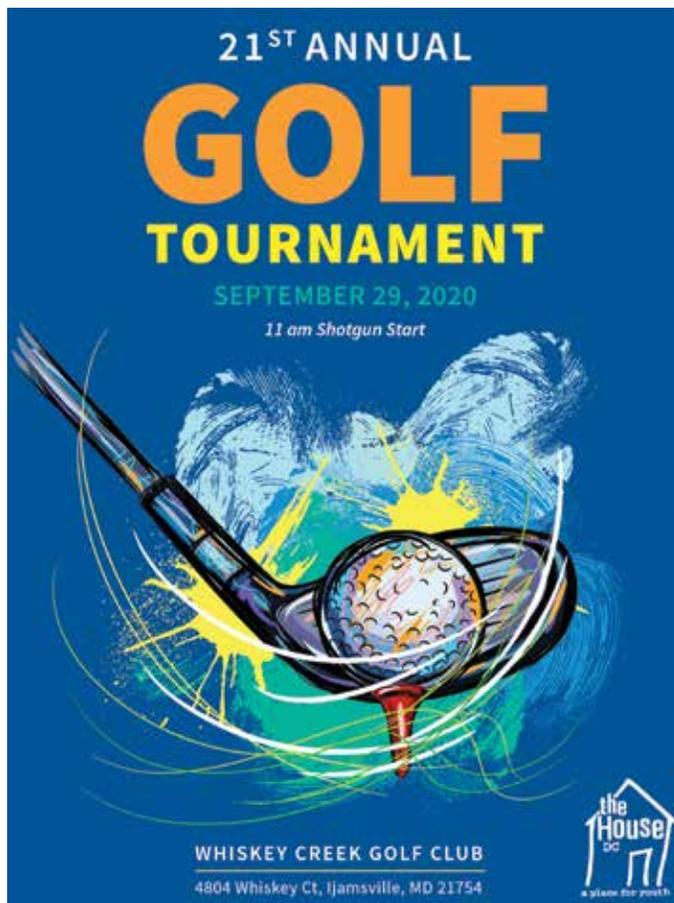
This holiday season, The House DC is finding joy and gratitude in times of distress. We are thankful for the health of our amazing students and staff, and the continued support of our donors who help us stay afloat and continue our work during this pandemic!

This season has been challenging for folks in Anacostia. The loss of jobs and homes has left many families struggling to make ends meet. There's no doubt that our community can use some love and The House DC has plenty of love to give!

Throughout the entire month of November, youth at The House DC were giving back to the community by distributing masks and preparing

homemade sandwiches, water, chips, and granola and handing them out in the community to anyone in need, especially persons who are homeless. (Rest assured, we take every possible safety precaution while preparing and serving.)

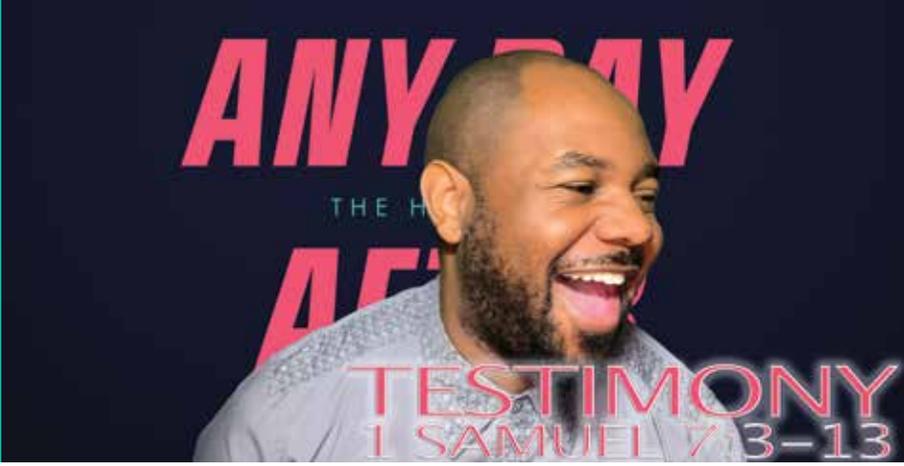
Our youth take pride in the fact that they get to be a blessing in their community. We wanted to meet people where they were, and to remind them just how important they are to us and just how much God loves them. Our mask and snack drop offs will be an ongoing activity, targeting the most challenging spots in the neighborhood and delivering God's light and love where they're needed most.



## Rain or shine, a pandemic or not,

our faithful sponsors of our Annual Golf Tournament come out each year and offer their support. **Thank you** for keeping this tradition alive as we celebrated our **21st Tournament.**

- George Dunn
- John Lynch Retirement Group
- Chartwell Investment Partners
- Mike & Lisa Toohy
- Pointer Management
- 12:45 Team: Keller Williams Realty
- Franchise Well
- The Harvey Group
- ReMax Realty Services
- Robert McDonald & Richard Schacht
- 1st Step Financial



Chris Chiles, Spiritual Life Director

## ANY DAY AFTER

The *Any Day After* Sunday service was born from a vision to create a new kind of church in Anacostia, a church deeply embedded in the community with a finger on the pulse of our neighborhood and the ability to meet each of us where we are—wherever we are.

We didn't plan to launch *Any Day After* in the midst of a pandemic. But, while we mourn the loss of physical connection, we are celebrating the unexpected bonus of truly being able to reach people wherever they are—through the internet! With this new outreach, we are

able to connect not only with our current students, but with alumni, parents and grandparents, as well.

*Any Day After* streams every Sunday and we've been thrilled by the overwhelming turnout! We set up a system of incentives for our kids ("prop points" that can be built up and cashed in for special outings) to get them engaged in services; we are inspired by the depth of their connection with the material. Every week our students are posting on social media and finding genuine connection with each other and God's Word. As we continue to find innovative ways to sow God's Word, we are expecting a harvest—any day!

## BUILDING NEW CYCLES

The goal of The House DC is to build a healthy, self-sustaining community. That's why we put such an emphasis on hiring former House students who have grown up in Anacostia and know what it takes to break cycles of poverty. While The House DC only has so many jobs available, our alumni—including those already working in other industries—are extremely enthusiastic about working with our students.

Our Executive Vice President, Jonathan Harris, has had the opportunity to hire employees for his own business from within The House DC family and says he proudly refers his workers out with total confidence.

Jonathan values the opportunity to continue to encourage and mentor our young people on the job. It's easy to stand behind our alumni, because, as

“ Let me tell you, they want to work. When you tell them you have a job—they will track you down. They show up on time and I never have to wait for anyone. ”

— Jonathan Harris

much as we would like to attribute their work ethic and aptitude solely to House programs, Anacostia is full of individuals who desperately want to work and will happily travel wherever they need to go to get there. They are not looking for a handout, but a hand up to lift them emotionally and spiritually out of their current cycles and into viable opportunities.

The Bible says that an “appetite and an empty stomach drives laborers on” (Proverbs 16:26), and Jonathan reminds us that our community is not only physically hungry, but hungry for hard work and a better future, as well.

Executive Vice President, Jonathan Harris with House Alumni Keionta





**Looking for pro bono renovation**, including supplies and equipment to convert a House property back to a residential unit. The property will provide opportunities for House staff to live in the community and provide stronger support. Contact: [lawonda.bornstein@thehousedc.org](mailto:lawonda.bornstein@thehousedc.org)

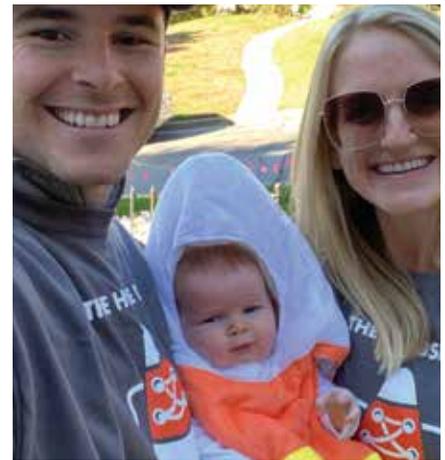


The Chiles Family

## RUNNING VIRTUALLY ANYWHERE

The House DC sponsored its second annual Candy Corn 5k from October 16 – 19, and even with the limitations of COVID, we had a successful and fun event. Pictures and online posts showed our runners supporting The House DC all over the country such as in Cape Cod, Tampa, Dallas, New York City, Charleston, Charlotte, Bethany Beach and all over the DMV. One of our youngest two-time participants (pictured on page 1), Brody Wiggins, age 4, was hopeful that he would still get candy corn during the race even if his family walked in their neighborhood. He was really excited when his T-shirt came in the mail with a package of candy corn!

Of the submitted times, the DMV’s John Rock placed first and Katelyn Engbert, also from the DMV, was the fastest woman again this year. Congratulations to all of our runners and walkers!



The Engbert Family

**Thank you to our sponsors who helped us make this event a success:**

