PLANTING SEEDS FOR THE FUTURE!

The House DC is like a garden. Seeds of hope, potential, confidence, and success are being planted and watered each day. Our staff are gardeners who have been given the gift of planting and nurturing these seeds so that, one day, they blossom into something extraordinary.

Kobe initially came to The House DC with a group of friends who were heading down the wrong path. Many of his close friends were involved in gangs, and other negative activities. Kobe had a choice to follow the crowd, but instead, he chose to listen to the words of his older brother Korey, a 2010 House DC alumni. Like Kobe, Korey was also involved with the wrong crowd. He would skip school that often led to troubling situations. Korey began spending more time at The House DC and less time with people who were making poor decisions.

Kobe took the advice of his older brother and began to take full advantage of the opportunities at The House DC. He actively participates in our Leadership Club, Book Club, and Art & Soul - but his favorite of all is Step Up, our fitness program. Kobe instantly connected with Dequwan Smith, Associate Director of Male Programs & Conflict Resolution. While participating in Step Up, Kobe is able to release stress and self-doubt while building physical strength and self-confidence. While Kobe’s friends drifted away from The House DC and deeper into negativity, Kobe kept a positive mindset and made it his business to continue coming each day, bringing new genuine friends along with him.

It wasn’t until I started coming to The House DC that I realized I was only doing those things because I didn’t see potential in myself. I didn’t see a bright future. When I started to come to The House and hearing about God I started to make changes in my life for the better. When I found out that my little brother was coming to The House I had to come and thank y’all in person. Thank you for seeing potential in my brother the same way the staff saw potential in me. I don’t know where I would’ve ended up without The House DC.

– Korey (House DC Alumni)
How many times has our Lord rescued us in times of trouble? How many times has He interceded on our behalf without us even knowing that He already predetermined a greater outcome in our favor? One of the many benefits of being a House DC student is having the committed network of House DC staff who work tirelessly to care and advocate for each student.

This was the case for two of our seniors who were recently expelled for fighting 45 days before graduation. One was an honor roll student and the other was weighing college options. Once The House DC was made aware of this situation we immediately went to work on their behalf. This was a unique situation. These students were siblings.

Jonathan Harris, Director of Life Skills, met with a woman whom he believed to be their mother. He later learned that this person was actually the students’ older sister who was serving as their parental guardian. It’s easy to ask yourself where the real parents are in a situation like this. Unfortunately, their mother deals with many difficulties and is emotionally absent, and sadly their father passed away last year from an overdose in the basement of their home while their children were upstairs. Once we understood their home environment, Jonathan reached out to the senior counselor and the Dean of Students to intercede on their behalf.

Due to the extenuating circumstances, the Dean agreed that mediation between the parties was the best path forward. The only condition was that The House DC staff be present instead of their parental guardian. Jonathan and staff member Jacob Johnson (a former House student) attended the mediation. Together with the Dean of Students, we ensured successful collaboration and consensus across both parties. We’re happy to report that both students are back in school and on their way to graduating. We’re also happy to report that the other 14 students involved in the fight are also back in school! The House DC mentors our students with love, and advocates for them behind the scenes.

Jonathan shared how this reminded him of an old song “Just As I Am.”

Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt. Fighting and fears within without. Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.

This song is a reminder to all of us that no matter our circumstances - even when we make the wrong decisions or exhibit wrong behaviors - we can have confidence that when we come to God, just as we are, He will intercede on our behalf causing all things to work together for our good and His glory.

We ask for prayer for the safety of our youth this summer, direction and support for a new Children’s Church, and a time of refreshment for House DC staff.
I CAN GO ANYWHERE!

“I came across a book I loved and realized that I can go anywhere in the world that I want to,” says Willie. What began as a way to pass time in a home without access to cable television, grew into an insatiable appetite for reading that is now helping students across Anacostia excel academically, intellectually and spiritually.

Willy started working with The House DC as a security guard interacting with the students regularly, gaining their trust and getting to know their unique personalities. When the opportunity arose to facilitate a weekly Book Club, he was not only willing, but his voracity for literature made him the perfect candidate. Willy is extraordinarily well-read in all genres, with a particular interest in inspirational and self-help, and knew that these kids could go anywhere they wanted to inside a book. He also knew the most effective way to approach the Club—if he could teach the students how to read as if they were watching a movie, then he was confident that the students would develop their own passion for books.

The purpose of Book Club is two-fold: (1) get kids interested in reading the Bible, by using self-help books to show that it all stems from the power of the Almighty God and (2) to envision a world beyond Anacostia. Each week, over a dozen high school students come together at The House DC to read and discuss a book selected by Willy. Selection criteria is simple—books that demonstrate that you are more than your current surroundings. Willy sees all too often that students don’t believe in themselves, and aims to overcome this through the works of various authors who offers a fresh perspective on attaining success through positive thinking, positive speaking, and aiming big beyond your current circumstances. These books are also grounded in biblical principles that are easy for students to understand and apply to their daily lives.

Willy has thoroughly studied each book prior to each session, and feels the energy of the room to guide the discussion. Students also engage in a drill Willy calls “Mega Memory”. Willy started Mega Memory after witnessing students speaking negatively about an upcoming exam or assignment, convincing themselves of failure. It is an interactive exercise that teaches students to associate a word they know with a word they don’t to sharpen their memory and learning skills. During each Mega Memory session, students are encouraged to be “smarter than their teacher”. And it has paid off in more ways than one. Students are not only passing exams using Mega Memory techniques, but they are also sharing the techniques with family members.

There is a sense of community, positive energy and lots of laughter coming from the Book Club classroom that draws students from the hallway to want to learn more. As the Book Club continues to attract more students and thrive, Willy envisions a very bright future including meeting people and visiting the places that the Club has studied. “If you only think about 17th and Q”, Willy reflects, “then that’s where you’ll end up. But books allow you to think worldwide and see a world beyond Anacostia. Reading is powerful.” All roads to living a life of purpose is found in The Book—The Word of God.
SUPPORTING AROUND THE WORLD

The House DC is a local “state-side” mission. In other words, our mission field is in many of your own backyards right here in the Anacostia community of southeast Washington, D.C. A stone’s throw away from the White House. We are so grateful for our donors and your desire to help The House DC make a difference on this side of the world. Our donor base spans throughout the United States and beyond our borders (Europe and Asia) to further the mission of breaking cycles and building futures through the love of Jesus.

The orange highlights show where our current donors are located. The House DC would love to expand the support to help “A Local Mission.”

ART & SOUL

Brie says that when she’s overwhelmed with the struggles of her chaotic home life, she turns on Gospel music to calm her down and bring her peace. And that is precisely what Art & Soul is about—a weekly outlet designed to offer students a moment of peace and relaxation creatively through art.

During our Art & Soul session, students are welcomed into a calming atmosphere with the soft tunes of Gospel music in the background. Whether our students are creating a new project or simply just relaxing, the inviting space has become a powerful outlet for many of our students.

The daily struggles of our community weigh heavily on our youth. Whether it’s food insecurity, not having a stable place to live, trying to get to and from The House DC and their home safely, and the violence and hopelessness they may experience daily, it is essential to create spaces for youth to channel negative thoughts or potential actions that can be detrimental to their futures.

Our Art & Soul program is not only for painting pictures and listening to music. It’s about allowing students a moment to process pain and begin to heal. It’s about teaching our youth new ways and techniques to release anger. Students often say, “I just need to paint today,” even when it’s not Art & Soul day. The House DC is dedicated to developing creative ways to support our youth as we guide them closer to the most creative one of all, God, who created all things.

Congratulations to Linae for completing her freshman year in college with a 3.9 GPA!

Linae with Beth D’Agostino (A Friend of The House DC)