

NEWS FROM theHouse^{DC}

December 2025



2 VOICES 6 OF HOPE

"Pray that I can forgive myself for the mistakes I made in the past and that I can move forward to a better future."

– H.N., Senior

When we reflect on these words from a high school senior at The House DC, we see the heart of our mission—to help youth seek God, embrace truth, and experience life more abundantly (John 10:10).

As The House DC celebrates **26 years of ministry**, we pause to listen to the voices that matter most—our youth. This year, we gathered 26 heartfelt notes filled with personal prayer requests, concerns, challenges, hopes, and moments of gratitude.

While only a few of these reflections are shared here, you can read more of their words on our website (thehousedc.org/about/publications). May they remind you that, because of Jesus and the faithful Friends of The House DC, at-risk youth in the Anacostia community are finding hope, healing, and encouragement for a brighter future.

“

I used to get in a lot of trouble at school, but now I'm doing better. The talks we have here at The House DC make you think about life differently. Now I think more about my future. — E.P., Junior

“

I don't feel safe anywhere in my community other than The House DC. People will start shooting even if it's first thing in the morning. I feel safe at The House DC because the staff always pray for me and make me feel protected.

– W.C., Senior

“

The House DC is my place of peace. Ever since I lost my grandmother, we've been moving from place to place, and really I'm just tired. Please pray that me and my siblings finally find a place to live that can be permanent and not just temporary. — M.L., Freshman

Faculty Prayer & Encouragement

Earlier this year, our team hosted a Prayer Breakfast for the faculty and staff of Anacostia High School, many of whom were carrying heavy burdens. From the moment they walked in, guests were greeted with warm smiles and Scripture cards bearing Luke 18:1: *"At all times they ought to pray and not give up and lose heart."*



Our Campus Pastor, Duane McKinney, shared words of hope and affirmation that spoke directly to the fatigue and emotional toll so many had been feeling.



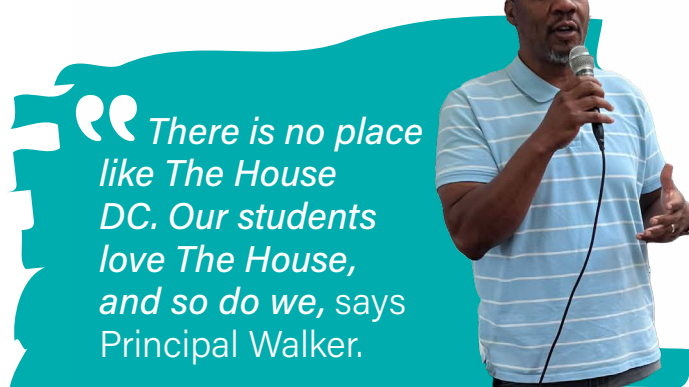
Vanessa Moore and Darlene Hall — faithfully serving both food and hope at The House DC

More than 50 educators gathered for peace in the presence of God. Teachers shared personal prayer requests, and some shared that they had nearly taken the day off due to stress but chose to stay after receiving prayer. One staff member said, *"I wasn't sure if I could make it through today. I didn't even want to get out of the car. But I'm so glad I did. This has shifted my entire week."*

Ms. Hodge, the school librarian, summed up the atmosphere best:

"Today had to be one of my best days in education! The prayer, testimonies, and love were both personally and professionally refreshing. I'm so grateful to The House DC for coming and creating this atmosphere. You all are always just one call away."

As the school year came to a close, The House DC hosted a second event—a **Dinner of Appreciation**—to pour back into the same educators.



"There is no place like The House DC. Our students love The House, and so do we, says Principal Walker."

Each guest received The House DC's 26th Anniversary booklet, which featured 26 handwritten notes from our youth. In these personal messages, students shared their concerns and gratefulness. They offered faculty a glimpse into the weight many of their students carry daily—worries about getting home safely, wondering if there will be food to eat, the pressure to find a job to help their mother, the instability of constantly moving, and other personal struggles.

This booklet served as a tangible reminder that behind every student sitting in class is a story of resilience and a daily fight for safety, stability, and hope.

Why It Matters

Events like these remind us that ministry doesn't stop with programs. By standing with educators, The House DC helps sustain those who pour into our youth every day. Whether through prayer, encouragement, or simply showing up with a warm meal and a kind word, we are committed to being present—not just for our youth, but for the entire ecosystem shaping their future for moments such as these.

Learning to Fight Right

In a community where violence is normalized and survival is a daily mindset, too many of our girls live like soldiers in a war zone. Physical altercations and violent disagreements are part of their everyday reality. Some carry knives, not out of aggression, but out of fear. They're just trying to make it through the day. This past year, one student was stabbed during a confrontation. These are not random scuffles, they can be life-threatening situations that leave deep physical and emotional wounds. At The House DC, we know these battles are more than physical, they're spiritual.

During spring break, our All-Girls Spiritual Retreat was a time set apart to pour into the hearts of our young women. Rather than staying in the chaos of the city, we brought them to a space of peace where they could experience rest and renewal. This retreat was crafted for

inner city youth navigating pain at home, chaos in school, and danger in their neighborhoods—girls who carry adult-sized burdens on their young shoulders.

At the retreat, they learned that their real enemy isn't each other, not even those who've caused them pain. The fight is spiritual. Focusing on Ephesians 6:10–18, they learned how to put on the full armor of God and lean into His strength, not their own. They discovered what it means to “fight right,” not with knives or fists, but with faith, prayer, and truth from the Word of God.

Amidst the spiritual work, there was joy. We laughed, cooked, swam, and played games. When it was time to return home, they weren't the same. These girls came back not just refreshed but spiritually rearmed, standing taller in who they are and whose they are.

“I'm so happy I came. I needed to be here. The peace and quiet was so calming. Everything y'all taught me was needed. I feel so much better.”— Caprice, 12th Grade

At The House DC, we stand in the gap as mentors, big sisters, and spiritual family. We're not just helping girls survive, we're helping them discover they were created for more.

A Rising Firefighter

D'Angelo, like many of the youth we serve, is no stranger to adversity. Growing up in Anacostia in a single-parent household, he struggled to meet even his basic needs. Surrounded by drugs, alcohol, and conflict, D'Angelo found a safe haven within the walls of The House DC. Despite the challenges at home, he carried an indescribable joy that lit up our space and everyone around him. During his time at The House DC, D'Angelo was introduced to Christ and made the life-changing decision to give his life to Him during one of our *Life Sessions*. Through his faith, he found the strength to navigate his challenges, carrying that same radiant smile all the way through high school.

Inside and outside The House, D'Angelo let his light shine. An athlete at heart, he participated in several school sports, including basketball and wrestling, while maintaining honor roll throughout high school. In 2023, he graduated at the top of his class, determined to make a difference. D'Angelo's dream was to help others. He poured this passion into serving alongside The House DC, helping deliver hot meals to those in need.

We are overjoyed to share that D'Angelo's dream has become a reality. He was accepted into the Fire Cadet Academy, where he will serve his community in Anacostia as a firefighter.



It feels amazing to have a career where I can actually help people every day. I'm most excited about my future and being able to provide for my family. I appreciate The House DC for always pushing me to be my best. It's only up from here.
— D'Angelo



A New Season



House staff, Larry Scott



House staff, Cleashay Sutton (far right)



Freshman saying grace

Our 2025/2026 school year began with a day of staff prayer. We stepped away from the city to seek the Lord together, setting the tone for what we believe will be another powerful year of ministry with our youth.

Before the school year kicked off, we had the joy of celebrating a special milestone: the wedding of Ayana Riley, a House DC staff member and alumna. From entering our doors as a student to now helping lead others, Ayana's journey reflects the lasting fruit of long-term investment in our young people.

This fall, we were excited to welcome a new group of freshmen into The House DC family. Many arrived with curiosity and quiet excitement, quickly absorbing the rhythms of this safe and loving space. Returning students led by example—welcoming others, saying grace before meals, and living out the values of respect, faith, and kindness.



Pastor Dr. Saun & Ayana Riley

House Speaker Rich

At our 26th Annual Banquet, House DC senior Rich shared how The House transformed his life from an angry ninth grader coping with loss, to a young man grounded in faith and purpose. He spoke about finding family, guidance, and hope through the staff's support and his relationship with Christ. His story beautifully captured the mission of The House DC.



Mark Schacht; Rich (Schacht Family Scholarship recipient); & House staff, Jonathan Harris



The Next Chapter for Our Graduates & Alumni

100% of seniors enrolled at The House DC crossed the finish line this year! These students showed remarkable resilience, pushing through challenges to earn their diplomas and prepare for life after graduation. Jonathan Harris (Executive Director of Life Skills) has spent years guiding youth through every step of the college process—from arranging campus visits and helping with financial aid to ensuring students have what they need to succeed. This year, he accompanied senior Ra'lon to begin her first year of college. The House DC also covered the expenses for her aunt—who raised Ra'lon and her little brother—to join them, ensuring Ra'lon had the love and support she needed as she

steps into new possibilities.

Several graduates are now attending colleges and universities including:

- Alabama State University
- Morgan State University
- Temple University
- Trinity Washington University
- University of the District of Columbia
- Virginia Union University
- Winston-Salem University

Others chose career or service paths such as the Fire Cadet Program and HVAC training. Together, their stories remind us that consistent investment in youth creates lasting change and brighter futures.



I've been at The House DC since the 9th grade. I probably would've been outside getting into trouble without y'all. But I'm going to college instead.

— Class of 2025 Senior



I'm so grateful I made it this far. The House DC helps me to see the positive in a negative situation. No matter what struggles I face, I know that God is always with me and He will never leave me by myself.

— L.J., Senior



Basketball and Faith



Help, we need a bigger court!

Pastor Duane is no stranger to the game of basketball. As a coach for the Four Point Play AAU Basketball League, you can often find him on the court with the guys, sneakers on and all. It was during one of those moments that Pastor Duane met Chris and began a conversation over basketball. When Pastor Duane invited Chris to join his Spring League, Chris didn't hesitate to say yes. But this invitation was about more than just basketball. It was an opportunity to mentor and invest in Chris on a spiritual level. Four Point Play isn't just a youth sports organization, it's rooted in Scripture (Luke 2:52) and its mission is to develop the mind, body, spirit, and community through sports and mentorship. The league focuses on character, healthy lifestyles, and community awareness.



Chris dedicated himself to the team and Pastor Duane made sure he had rides to and from practices and games. Over time, Chris built strong bonds with his teammates, becoming part of a brotherhood and always giving his best. The team went on to win the championship, with Chris playing a pivotal role in the victory.

More than the championship, we celebrate Chris' growth—not just as an athlete, but as a young man. His journey, both on and off the court, is a testimony to the power of relationship and faith in God. Chris continued to play in the summer league, and we are excited to watch him grow in his game and in his walk with Christ.



House DC Alumni Brian Harris, Certified Massage Therapist for the Washington Mystics (left); The House DC Co-founder Steve Fitzhugh (right)

Making Disciples

Everyday, House staff, Asa Williams seeks the Lord's guidance, asking about students' specific needs. Rodney is one of our most popular students, known for his charisma and natural leadership abilities. Asa shared how the Lord spoke to him on numerous occasions during his personal prayer time about Rodney. One day, Asa asked Rodney when would he take God seriously? As Asa shared the Gospel, breaking down why the sacrifice of Jesus was so vital, Rodney sat up in his chair, looking more motivated to listen.

Like so many others, Rodney was hesitant because he believed that in order to accept Christ, he needed to be perfect before even starting his journey. Once Asa shared his own testimony with him, he found a sense of relief. Once everything was clear, Asa asked, "so, do you want to give your life to Jesus?" Rodney immediately

responded "yes!" At that very moment, Asa led him in the prayer of salvation, and assured him that he would be there to support him as he navigates his new life in Christ.

"We believe that in order to break cycles and build futures of hope, we must give them a new foundation—The Word of God. We also hope to provide opportunities for these students to lead our weekly youth Bible discussions, showing others that it's not only cool to be young and live for Jesus, but also empowering," says Asa.



Pastor Appreciation Month

During Pastor Appreciation Month, The House DC celebrated Pastor Tony Lowery and Pastor Duane McKinney—both of whom have made a profound impact on our students, staff, and community.

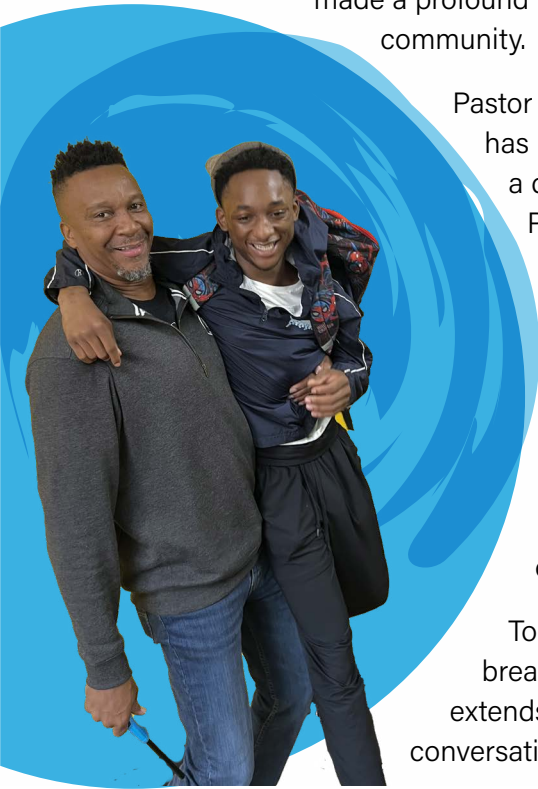
Pastor Tony, a Senior Pastor in Washington, DC, has been part of The House DC family for over a decade. He now serves as our Staff & Campus Pastor. With wisdom, steady faith, and a servant's heart, he grounds our team in purpose and reminds us what the church should look like and that ministry starts with presence—showing up and walking alongside others.

Pastor Duane, a Senior Pastor in Maryland, serves as our Youth & Community Pastor (and basketball coach). A trusted mentor to many, he offers compassion and spiritual guidance to our teens. This summer, he opened his church to host the funeral of a beloved student, offering comfort in a time of grief and continuing to support students in their healing journey.

Together, Pastor Tony and Pastor Duane embody the heart of The House DC: breaking cycles and building futures through the love of Jesus. Their leadership extends far beyond Sunday mornings, reaching into classrooms, courts, and one-on-one conversations that change lives.



Pastor Duane



Pastor Tony

Christmas on the Southside

Christmas at The House DC is filled with joy, warmth, and community. The building comes alive with festive lights and laughter as students gather to celebrate the season together. "Everything we do during the holidays is intentional. We're not decorating to make the building beautiful—it's so much more than that," says House staff Britney Smith.

For many of our youth, Christmas can be a difficult time. Home doesn't always include family gatherings, gifts, or decorations. The House DC's celebrations offer a space where inner city youth can feel love, connection, and the true spirit of the season. Each student receives special gifts, and their parent or caregiver has a place to shop for free—ensuring they have something to give or receive.

The most meaningful moments come when staff share the true meaning of the season—The Gospel Message of Jesus—and an opportunity to make Christ, Lord of their life. Beyond the gifts and decorations, Christmas at The House DC is about faith, hope, and transformation.



Thank You 2025 Sponsors

Banquet

Anniversary

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Anniversary

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Chad Morgan

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Mike Toohey



Students from Baylor University visit The House DC



President & CEO La Wonda Violet (center) joined guests at a lovely ladies tea hosted by Advisory Board Member Colleen Morehead. Colleen gathered longtime friends to highlight the mission of The House DC and shared a video about its impact.



26th Anniversary Banquet



26th Annual Golf Tournament

SAVE

the

DATE

5.11.2026

The House DC's 27th Anniversary Celebration
at the Hilton McLean



"ONE BODY, MANY PARTS"



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Breaking Cycles
Building Futures