



BRETHREN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

219 Hummel Street Harrisburg, Pa. 17104

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BRETHREN HOUSING ASSOCIATION

FOUNDATIONS

for success

*Share love,
give hope,
change
lives.*

*Spring: new life and
new opportunities*



Welcome Maria!

Due to our recent expansion, plus normal program turnover, we have a lot of apartments to get ready for new families this winter. Maria (left) and her two children Shaylen and Aramis recently joined our program and moved into a three bedroom apartment. Maria was being supported locally by Market Square Presbyterian Church while homeless, even sleeping on the floor of the church parlor at one point. Volunteers from Market Square poured significant volunteer hours and skilled labor into getting Maria's apartment ready so that she and her kids could find stability and start working on their goals.

SPRING
2009

INSIDE: Tony Campolo is coming to BHA!



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Catching Up with Felicia Wilkerson

by Jennifer Rash, Program Coordinator - Family Support

Editor's Note: As BHA enters our 20th Anniversary year, we are celebrating our history and looking toward future growth. We often feature stories of current BHA participants in our newsletter, but this month we decided to highlight Felicia, a graduate of our transitional housing program who shares about her time at BHA and where she is today.

ALTHOUGH IT'S BEEN NEARLY 10 YEARS since Felicia was a participant in BHA's transitional housing program, she still gets emotional when she reflects on how far she has come. Felicia was living in Harrisburg and going to school for paralegal studies when she decided to get married and move to Atlanta. But, when life began to unravel in Georgia, she made the difficult decision to move back to Pennsylvania with her 10-year-old daughter Tomika. They had nothing but each other and the clothes on their backs.

Struggling to get her life together, Felicia took the advice of a friend and decided to apply to BHA. She remembers looking our case manager Chris Patrick straight in the eye and telling her that Felicia had high expectations for herself and high expectations of the program too. Felicia was serious about making changes in her life, all she needed was guidance and support, which she received at BHA. With Chris's help, Felicia got reestablished in Harrisburg, improved her financial situation and went back to school.

She remembered a time when she'd gotten less than an A in one of her classes and was so disappointed in herself. But Roger Steffy, our

Executive Director at the time, encouraged her to stop beating herself up for minor setbacks. BHA gave her the confidence she needed and she started to believe she could achieve her hopes and dreams. As I interviewed her for this article she told me, "You'll never fail until you give up trying. If you try, nothing is impossible!"

Since her time on Hummel Street, Felicia has bought a car and her own home and she's still going to school. She's received three Associates Degrees from HACC—one in Paralegal Studies and the other two in Social and Human Services. While continuing her studies at HACC, Felicia is almost finished completing her Bachelor's in Human Services at Shippensburg University. She is employed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of State's Professional Health Monitoring Program and remains financially self-sufficient.

Felicia says she had everything; she lost everything and then got it back and so much more. If there's one other thing she's learned from BHA, it's that sometimes you need to put your pride aside and ask for help. BHA gave her the jump start she needed to accomplish her goals

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Felicia (right), here with her daughter Tomika, reflects on her time at BHA: "You'll never fail until you give up trying. If you try, nothing is impossible!"

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

2. BHA: From Vision to Reality
3. Tony Campolo to speak at 20th Anniversary Banquet
4. Invest in H.O.P.E.
5. Many Hands Make Light Work

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A LOOK BACK

From Vision To Reality

The first in a four part series on the founding, growth and future of BHA

An interview with BHA founder Gerald Rhoades by Steve Schwartz, Executive Director

IN 2009 WE CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF MINISTRY ON Hummel Street. As we are in the process of significant expansion, we also want to reflect on our past and where God has brought us. I recently talked about the founding of BHA with Gerald Rhoades, the original Director of BHA. Gerald was the Outreach Pastor at First Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg beginning in 1983, and is currently Director of Brethren Community Ministries.

Steve: Where did the idea or vision for BHA come from?

Gerald: First Church of the Brethren owned a home next door at 207 Hummel Street that we called the Fellowship House. For many years young women had come from surrounding communities to live there while they sought schooling or employment in the city. By the mid-80s, for a variety of reasons, this model was no longer needed. I started exploring what other housing needs there might be in the community.

What did you find?

Gerald: Well, at that time, there were limited options for homeless families. There were some 30 day shelters, but not much in the way of longer term housing programs. Also, a male child over 12 couldn't stay with his mom in a shelter, so sometimes families had to be broken up when they became homeless. There was a need for a longer-term program customized to the needs of families.

So how did BHA come about?

Gerald: Hanoverdale Church of the Brethren (COB) outside Hershey had been taking service groups to New York City and started to realize they could serve just as effective-

ly 15 minutes down the road in Harrisburg. We at First Church had a relationship with Hanoverdale and were partnering on some other efforts. Hanoverdale's Pastor Ron Ludwick, First Church's Pastoral Couple Irv and Nancy Heishman, and I started talking about how we could use the Fellowship House to help homeless families. Some others were involved in those discussions, and the idea for bridge housing was generated. We focused on bridge housing in the early days, but kept the purpose of the organization broad. We wanted to be open to adjusting what we did as we learned, as long as it stayed in the realm of housing and service to the homeless.



Gerald describes the beginning of BHA as an outgrowth of First Church of the Brethren's former Fellowship House.

“I think its encouraging how God can bless small steps of faith. If you don't try things you'll never know what could be.”

Who else was involved?

Gerald: John Nantz, Steve Royer, Harry Stroup, Pam Burkhart, David Markey and Stephen Geesaman held the first Board meeting on June 26, 1989, though discussions had been happening for a year or so. The pastors were ex-officio members. I was designated as case manager and administrator. First Church eventually donated the property at 207 Hummel Street, another couple connected to the church donated 209 Hummel Street, and we quickly had five apartments. Pretty soon other churches became members of the association: Ridgeway Community COB in suburban Harrisburg, Conewago COB outside Hershey, and Spring Creek COB in Hershey were the next three. We didn't intend to limit ourselves to support from the Church of the Brethren—we used “brethren” in the organizational title due to the rich biblical meaning of the word—but obviously our strongest ties were in COB circles.

What did you learn in those early days?

Gerald: Well, we were kind of naïve going in to it. I remember some early evictions that were traumatic for us all. We quickly learned we

needed more intentional casework services. At the beginning, the pastors were trying to meet once a week with each family, but the families needed more specialized help. There was also some cross cultural understanding we needed to develop.

In the next issue of our newsletter, we'll discuss how BHA learned from these early lessons. In closing, how did you see the hand of God in the beginning of BHA?

CATCHING UP with Felicia . . .
(continued from page 1)

and create a new life for herself and her daughter. Her daughter is now 21 years old and is a certified carpenter studying to be a certified pharmaceutical technician. Felicia has also just become a foster mom to a 14 year old girl, who's being given a second chance to be part of a family.

It is Felicia's hope to be able to help others in the same situation in which she found herself back in 1999. As she's finishing up her degree at Shippensburg, Felicia plans to find a

Gerald: I've always felt trying new ideas is part of the discernment process. First Church has tried a lot of ministry outreach work over the years. Some lasted a short while and weren't deemed effective. Others, like BHA, started small, people watered the vision, walked alongside as it grew and made corrections along the way. I think its encouraging how God can bless small steps of faith. If you don't try things you'll never know what could be ... sometimes I don't think the church

full-time position in Human Services so that she can be the inspiration to others that Chris and BHA were to her. In the meantime, Felicia has agreed to become a Bagwashi Circle volunteer at BHA, where she'll have an opportunity to encourage our women and become a support to our families. I think Felicia will serve as a reminder to our moms that nothing is impossible. ■



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

20 Years of Hope

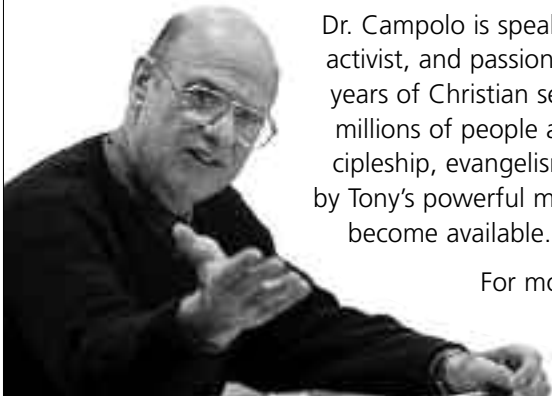
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION BANQUET:

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

This year our featured speaker will be **Tony Campolo**, professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University, founder and president of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, and author of 35 books.

Dr. Campolo is speaker, author, sociologist, pastor, social activist, and passionate follower of Jesus. Over his many years of Christian service, Tony has boldly challenged millions of people all over the world to respond to God's boundless love by combining personal discipleship, evangelism, and social justice. We invite you to join those of us who have been inspired by Tony's powerful message of hope. Check our website for registration and location details as they become available.

For more information or questions, contact Heather Kelly at hkelly@bha-pa.org or (717) 233-6016.



thinks big enough.

Thanks, Gerald, for your time ... and your legacy in bringing this vision to reality.

In our next issue, we'll continue the discussion with John Nantz, founding Board member and BHA's first paid staff member, and Paul Wessell, BHA Board member from 1990 to the present.

Can't wait for your BHA Update?

We have a brief monthly email newsletter that keeps you informed on upcoming work days, shares highlights of recent activities, and shares event details and volunteer opportunities. Send an e-mail to bhaupdatesubscribe@bha-pa.org with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to be added to the list.

REASONS TO
Celebrate

- **Megan**, who recently graduated from the program, is enjoying her new home and doing well at work.
- **Liz** paid off all of her debt!
- **Steffanie** obtained a car and started a job training program.
- **Dianne and Alisha** maintained full-time employment with benefits.
- **Edna** found permanent housing.
- We welcomed Veronica, Maria, MarQuitta and Hazel, along with their children, into our program.

FOUNDATIONS OF STEWARDSHIP

Giving Stock? Now? **Are you serious?**

TYPICALLY, GIFTS OF STOCK ARE GIVEN WHEN they are highly appreciated. But some donors are deciding to donate their devalued stock in this economy. It can still be a blessing to a non-profit organization like ours! Contact Heather Kelly at hkelly@bha-pa.org or (717) 233-6016 for more information, or obtain a Stock Gifting Form on the Documents page of the BHA website (www.bha-pa.org). ■

20TH ANNIVERSARY SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Invest in H.O.P.E! Housing, Opportunity, Promise, Encouragement

In this, our 20th anniversary year, we have a variety of sponsorship opportunities available for churches or businesses who want to invest in the work of helping homeless single moms get back on their feet. You can sponsor our Golf Tournament, Bike Tour or 20th Anniversary Celebration Banquet individually, or we have packages available in which your sponsorship can stretch across all three of these events. For more information, visit the BHA website (www.bha-pa.org) or contact Heather Kelly at hkelly@bha-pa.org or (717) 233-6016.

Friday, May 15, 2009 Seventh Annual...



Scramble format tournament at
Parline Golf Course
in Elizabethtown, Pa.

Shotgun start at 12:30.

Registration starts at 11:30 with hot dog, chips and soda provided.

Entry fee is \$70 per person (\$280 for a team of four), featuring:

- 18 holes of golf, with cart
- Skill and team prizes
- Door prizes & Silent Auction
- Catered full-course dinner

For more details, to register, or to sponsor, use the registration form included in this newsletter or contact Josh Stroup, Event Coordinator, at jstroup3@comcast.net or (717) 545-1472.

Saturday, May 16, 2009 Fifth Annual...



Featuring loops of
**25 Miles, 50 Miles, and 100
Kilometers (62.2 Miles).**

**STARTING AT THE PALMYRA
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN** and touring through Lebanon, Lancaster and Dauphin Counties...with prizes!

Registration is free if you commit to raising \$250 in sponsorship money ... or \$100 for those choosing to not raise sponsorship funds.

For more details, to register, or to sponsor, use the registration form included in this newsletter or contact Darrel Reinford, Event Coordinator at kirstendarrel@pa.net or (717) 213-9316.

Register early so we can provide you with materials to make your fundraising easy!

Prayer Requests & Praises

- We keep running into roadblocks in terms of childcare. For single moms to start a job or job training program they need childcare. There is a long waiting list for subsidized childcare in Dauphin County, typically six months, and you don't qualify to get on the list until you have a job. So its a catch-22 — you can't get a job because you don't have childcare, you can't get childcare because you don't have a job. Please pray for us as we wrestle with this and look for creative solutions.
- Times are tough for everyone in this economic climate. Our supporters have been extra committed during this time, and therefore we are approaching our fiscal year-end ever-so-slightly in the black. Praise God for a faithful support base!
- At the same time, we know that some friends and supporters have lost their jobs or face other financial challenges. The economic climate also makes it difficult for our women to find employment and affordable housing. Please join us in lifting up our participants and our ministry friends during this recession.
- We're blessed to be able to meet the demand for increased services during the recession by expanding our program from 9 to 12 families. Our next step is finalizing the plan to grow to 20 families in the next 2-4 years. Ask God to grant us wisdom, discernment, and provision.
- Continue to pray for our Bagwashi Circles effort, that participants can strengthen their network of supportive relationships during their time at BHA.

GETTING INVOLVED AT BHA

Many Hands...

By Heather Kelly, Director of Development

THIS YEAR, MY WEDDING anniversary fell on the third Monday in January, also Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Initially my husband and I planned to spend a leisurely day together. But, when BHA scheduled a volunteer workday, we decided that we could better celebrate our marriage, and the life and legacy of Dr. King, by serving homeless women and children. It was great to spend the morning with volunteers from Elizabethtown College and several local churches making sure that two more families would have a warm home this winter.

Before the families that we work with at BHA can achieve goals necessary to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness, they need to be free from worrying about where they will sleep at night. Therefore, providing stable housing is a foundation of our program's success. Renovating and maintaining apartments for 30-40 women and children at any given time takes a lot of man (and woman) power. That is where the hard work and dedication of volunteers comes in.

Over the past 20 years, caring individuals and groups have volunteered



This winter, we've put out a serious call for volunteers as we have many apartments to get ready due to our program expansion from 9 to 12 families. The response has been amazing. Thank you. Here, Randy Estep (left) and Ken Stewart work to rebuild an interior staircase.

As we continue to expand our transitional housing program in the coming months and years, there will be many more opportunities to serve homeless families. We want to take this opportunity to say thank you to volunteers past, present and future. Each of you is helping BHA build a future with hope for homeless women and children. If you would like more information on upcoming BHA workdays or other volunteer opportunities, contact me at (717) 233-6016 or hkelly@bha-pa.org. ■

countless hours working on BHA apartments. Without this help, we would not be able to provide warm homes to families that come to us from homeless shelters, condemned rental units, and regularly moving from one family member's house to another's.

Some volunteers have come 2-3 days a week for years. Others are able to serve once or twice a year. Regardless of the length or frequency of service, each stroke of a paintbrush and strike of a hammer brings one family closer to breaking the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

Upcoming BHA Workdays

We're undertaking a lot of property maintenance/rehab work this Spring. Check the BHA website (www.bha-pa.org) for the most up-to-date listing of workdays at our properties on Hummel Street.

SPECIAL THANKS

■ To volunteers from PFM Asset Management LLC who provided a wonderful Christmas meal for our families and Bagwashi volunteers at our December Bagwashi Circle Night.

■ To Louise Craft and her childcare crew from Spring Creek Church of the Brethren (COB) who nurture our children on Bagwashi Circle Nights.

■ To Harvey and Ellie Kuntz and Marlys Book for providing regular childcare while our moms attend Support Group. And also for the

handful of others who come when they can: Ziva, Sarah, Joelle and Atiya.

■ To Samara: The Center for Individual and Family Growth for providing a comprehensive 16 session parenting curriculum to our families, complete with a meal and their own group of childcare volunteers.

■ For all the Bagwashi Circle Volunteers who have been getting to know our families.

■ To Ed Good and Jerry Stouffer for their regular property maintenance volunteer help every week.

■ To volunteers from Elizabethtown College, Indian Creek COB, Frederick (Md.) COB, Highmark Blue Shield, Mount Wilson COB, Harrisburg Brethren in Christ Church, Mechanic Grove COB, West Green Tree COB, Blue Ball COB, Spring Creek COB and Market Square Presbyterian Church for all of their help getting apartments ready for new families.

■ To Elizabethtown COB for a pork and sauerkraut fundraising dinner that raised almost \$2,000 for our work.