



CORNERSTONE COMMUNITY OUTREACH

December, 2016

Dear Friends,

What a wonderful year we have had here at Cornerstone Community Outreach! Thanks to your support so many occasions arose that allowed us to help those less fortunate than ourselves. In fact, our year began with a group of CCO staff members volunteering to visit the Uptown viaducts to help fill out housing and assistance forms for some of our most vulnerable homeless friends. The arch of the viaduct gave a “stable-like” appearance to the living conditions of those we talked with. Many of the original 75 we met have now moved into permanent housing but more remain in need and the work goes on.

This summer we were contacted by three different people who spent a part of their childhood in one of CCO’s shelter programs for homeless families. We often wonder what happens to the thousands of children we have sheltered over the past 25 years. This summer we got a small glimpse. All three people expressed their experience at CCO as being a bright light in a particularly gloomy time in their family’s life. All three have gone on to college and employment. One is featured in our most recent newsletter in an article entitled, “Don’t Give Up: Shirley’s Story.” Shirley spoke at our annual Back-to-School rally where she challenged the kids to never give up, but have hope, because she had come from the shelter too. Her words encouraged and empowered all of us.

Hope has indeed flared up among the children of CCO. This past month the school-age kids gathered together to perform a Talent Show. Children with seemingly nothing, no home, no pets, no game systems, worked together and practiced relentlessly to give their all at the Talent Show. Cultures and skin colors blended together in a cacophony of singing and dancing. One end of the CCO dining room was cleared to create a stage within a sea of tables and chairs. They practiced faithfully every week, sometimes twice, intent and focused on exercising, creating, and sharing what bubbled within them. The night of the Talent Show parents, siblings, staff, and other residents showed up to witness pure energy and talent without props or gimmicks. Hope, creativity, and purpose were all on display as these wonderful children performed, encouraging all of us in attendance. Bisma, the Talent Show organizer, said, “We gave them a microphone and they found their voice.”



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Then there is Jahkil, a 9-year-old boy, with a heart for giving. He saw the needs of homeless people, especially children his own age, and found a way to help. Jahkil gathered supplies and donations, came to CCO and handed out hygiene supplies and socks. His practical gifts showed that we're never too young to do a good thing.

Or there's 8-year-old Parker, who held a hot chocolate and lemonade stand and brought his profits to CCO instead of spending the money on himself. **In a year of difficult times, suspicion, uncertainty, and unrest in the world, the children are getting it right.**

I am thankful for every one of the children who are sheltered with their families here at Cornerstone and for their example of hope and creativity. I am thankful for every single person who comes through our doors often at the lowest point of their lives. And I am thankful to every one of you who journey with us as CCO continues to work to help the families and individuals find stability and permanent housing. Everyday is an opportunity to serve nutritious meals, offer essential clothing, and assist families and individuals with housing and employment referrals and services. Birthdays, special events, milestones, and the Holiday Season is not forgotten but celebrated.

Will you help us to continue welcoming those experiencing homelessness? Your financial donation will help these vital services. If you donate before December 31, your donation is 100% tax deductible. I hope you enjoy the enclosed 2017 calendar and the knowledge that 1,048 people of all ages have moved from homelessness to housing through CCO in the past five years.

Merry Christmas! Everyone at CCO hopes you have a Happy Holiday and an outstanding new year!

Sincerely,

Sandra J. Ramsey,
Executive Director,
Cornerstone Community Outreach