

# PLASE & POINT

A PUBLICATION OF PROJECT PLASE

'THE S IS FOR SHELTER'

SUMMER/FALL 2003

## Priorities: Compassion & Need First

The role of PLASE is to be a compassionate presence in our world, not only directly to individuals, but also in addressing the systematic causes and solutions of poverty. We agree with former Senator Hubert Humphrey:

*"The moral test of a government is how it treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who are in the shadow of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped." (1976)*

Our very presence stands for the belief that a different, more compassionate and more effective way is possible. Hence, in the spirit of being the "voice" for and with the individuals we house, we express our concerns over the current priorities of this administration and the detrimental affect its budget would have on PLASE's populations.

We offer below excerpts from the recent *Network* article "A Social Justice Network" as the concerns delineated echo those of PLASE.

*"We are a generous and caring people. We don't believe in a sink-or-swim society. The policies of our government*

*must heed the universal call of all faiths to love a neighbor as we would want to be loved ourselves."*

*Thus spoke President Bush in a speech last year, on his philosophy of "compassionate conservatism."*

*But the President's most recent budget priorities are anything but compassionate. How our representatives in Congress choose to respond will affect the lives of those who are poor for years to come.*

*The President proposed deep cuts in social programs, coupled with changes that are fundamental and structural. If passed, they would alter the country as profoundly as did the social programs of the 1930's and the 1960's—but based on radically different values and principles. The President's budget for 2004 hurts those who are most vulnerable by undermining the security of the nation's social safety net and the government's ability to carry out its basic responsibilities in the future. It also damages the nation's fiscal stability. If this budget proposal depicts compassion, the nation has truly lost its heart.*

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▼  
The President's budget for 2004 hurts those who are most vulnerable

## More Hero than Homeless



Alton Newton, Jr.

In early May, PLASE lost a dear friend and former client to a heroic act. Through his actions, Alton Newton, Jr. was able to save his family from the blaze of an apartment fire. Tragically, Alton himself did not survive the fire.

Alton Newton was a dedicated father and very devoted to his family. When homeless, he would use whatever money he had to provide for his family before himself. In a story published by local radio station WBAL on May 6, 2003, Alton's sister is quoted as saying "I feel like my brother is an angel in the sky. He put forth his life for his kids. It was never a choice. He said, 'Get the kids out first.'" This is the Alton that PLASE knew as well. He will be missed. Our thoughts and prayers remain with his family. ||

## Birthday Bounty of Generosity

In June of this year, board of trustee member Rabbi Joshua Martin Siegel celebrated his 70th birthday with a fun-filled party at his home in Ellicott City. More than 70 colleagues and friends helped celebrate. At Rabbi Siegel's request, in lieu of birthday gifts, guests made donations in memory of his wife to Project PLASE.

Rabbi Siegel has been a long time friend and associate of Project PLASE, regularly interacting with clients and providing support. His generosity as well as the generosity of others yielded a donation of \$4,000 to Project PLASE.

Project PLASE would like to thank everyone who donated, especially Rabbi Siegel. ||

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# Priorities: Compassion & Need First

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*The budget calls for reductions in after-school services and vocational training. Forty-five programs in the Department of Education are eliminated. Aid for rural development is reduced and the program to put 100,000 new police officers on the streets of the nation is phased out. The plan also relies on budgetary devices such as an expansion of user fees for safety inspections required of poultry and meat producers. Even as the President was lauding today's young soldiers for their willingness to sacrifice their lives for freedom, he was proposing to make veterans pay new charges for their medical care. President Bush has prided himself in his support of education and the military. However, he is proposing big cuts in a program that aids children and military personnel.*

## HOUSING

*The budget also proposes sweeping changes in federal low-income housing programs. The Section 8 voucher program, the nation's largest rental assistance program, would be block granted starting in FY'05, giving the states the money which is currently allocated to local housing authorities. The Administration changes the name of the program from Housing Choice Vouchers to Housing Assistance for Needy Families (HANF). Housing advocates are concerned that states are not adequately equipped to run housing programs. Converting the voucher program to a state block grant is a change that could place pressure on states to take assistance away from the neediest families by weakening the targeting requirement. This important requirement directs the assistance to those whose incomes are 30 percent less than the median in their area. Without this*

*federal requirement, states would be able to shift resources to families with higher incomes or serve fewer families. Other federal housing aid is cut, and in some cases eliminated. The HOPE VI program, which demolishes dilapidated public housing units and builds new dwellings, is completely cut.*

## DEFICITS

*The past two years have seen the most dramatic shift in a federal budget in decades. The Administration inherited a projected ten-year surplus of \$5.6 trillion which has disappeared. The budget submitted forecasts a \$307 billion deficit for FY '04, which follows on a \$304 billion deficit for FY '03. According to the Administration's own figures, short falls are projected that will amount to more than \$1 trillion over the next five years.*

## TAX CUTS AND MORE TAX CUTS

*A broad array of tax cuts that would drastically reduce government revenue for years to come, are also part of the*

*Bush proposal. They include tax-free savings for anyone who has money enough to afford it, eliminating the tax on stock dividends and accelerating and making permanent the 2001 \$1.35 trillion tax cut. Some economists warn that the proposed tax cuts will do nothing to stimulate the economy and will critically worsen the deficit. These tax cuts are heavily tilted to benefit those who are wealthy, at an estimated cost of \$2.5 trillion through 2013. This lost revenue will starve current programs. The shrinking revenue also comes as Baby Boomers begin retiring and start drawing on Social Security and Medicare.*

## WHO GETS THE BIGGEST PIECE OF THE PIE?

*The largest actual increase in money would go to the defense budget. The President has allocated \$16.9 billion above current levels for a total of \$399.1 billion for the military, an increase of 4.4 percent. Of that amount, \$9.8 billion is for missile defense, a \$1.5 billion increase over last year. The budget contains a \$14 million request for a "space test bed" to deploy weapons in space for the first time. The Pentagon eats over half of the total discretionary spending pie. The U.S. spends more on its military than the rest of the world combined. It is 14 percent higher than the average Cold War budget, even in today's dollars. Despite this massive increase it does not include provisions for war with Iraq, for which the Administration requested another \$63 billion in March. Another \$4 billion for homeland security was included in the Supplemental. Even before this new request, the Administration planned to spend \$2.7 trillion on the military over the next six years.*

## WHAT DO WE CARE ABOUT?

*[Project PLASE and] Network believes that the budget is a moral document of our nation's priorities. It clearly shows what we value. It is essential to look beyond the rhetoric and see what in fact the real priorities are by examining where this Administration is spending money and on whom. Those most dependant on assistance from our government, those who are poor, low-income workers, the elderly and infirm, are seeing programs they depend on slashed.*

*In the words of the Children's Defense Fund, "We don't have a money problem in our nation. We have a values and priorities problem and it is time to change those values and priorities."*

Project PLASE's philosophy and standard remains "Those with the greatest need should receive the greatest service." We urge you to join us in being an advocate and endeavoring to eliminate the cause of poverty and homelessness.

We thank author Anne Curtis and *Network* for the clarity of thought expressed in the above article. May our values and priorities become those of the persons in our midst in the greatest of need. ||

► It is essential to look beyond the rhetoric and see what in fact the real priorities are by examining where this Administration is spending money and on whom

# He's Not Homeless, He's My Brother

By Allison J. Brodsky

Vester Shorts is the founder and Director of the nonprofit organization, He's My Brother, Inc., an organization that assists homosexual, bisexual, and transgender African-Americans in coping with HIV/AIDS and social, familial, and religious issues surrounding their sexuality. The organization, via the Internet, provides a safe haven for open discussion and emotional release amongst peers. Vester manages and interacts with many support groups that the organization runs, reaching men all over the country and perhaps even internationally. Additionally, Vester also sits on the Ryan White Planning Council and is a former minister.

What one would never guess, however, is that six years ago Vester was homeless.

Vester's true struggle began in the early nineties. He had been diagnosed HIV+ and had begun treatment. At this time, he was still working and had permanent residency. This, however, was all about to change. As the HIV and associated medications took effect, Vester's physical condition worsened. The medications designed to save his life ironically began to destroy it. He developed swelling and a blood clot in his leg. He also struggled with Irritable Bowel Syndrome. The medications used to remedy his HIV often caused gastro-intestinal as well as other upset.

» Vester's new organization provides a safe haven for open discussion and emotional release amongst peers

Vester could no longer hold his full-time job. At his lowest point, Vester was not able to work or take part in daily living activities. Emotionally and physically drained, Vester sank deeper into depression as everything in his life collapsed. With few alternatives left, Vester was referred to and gained housing from Project PLASE's Shelter Plus Care Program. This is a sponsor-based subsidized housing program that assists homeless men and women with HIV/AIDS, chronic mental illness, and/ or substance abuse in obtaining stable housing and case management. This was Vester's turning point. This program, along with Project PLASE's caring staff gave him the motivation to move from certain homelessness. A place to call

home, in all senses, is life-giving. "It helped me grow," Vester stated as he recounted his time with Project PLASE.

In 1999, Vester started to reclaim his life as he began going to community college. Through his interaction with PLASE, he was able to continue to thrive. By 2000, he began medication and counseling for his physical and emotional concerns. The medication helped him a great deal, but the therapy, or rather the inadequacy of it at his lowest point, proved to be the catalyst in Vester's success. When in great need of peer support, he found that the few groups available for his particular population were uncomfortable for him to participate in. Through determination and his computer, Vester was able to connect with men and women across America who were searching for the same human connection. This outreach effort became an organization, He's My Brother, Inc., which now reaches across the country and provides invaluable support and education to its members. It focuses mainly on the Metropolitan Baltimore and DC areas and provides education as well as support. "Our mission is to foster a supportive community for the gay, bisexual, transgender[ed] and lesbian individuals of color living with HIV/AIDS in order to educate, empower and inform."

When asked about how his new support felt, he responded in one word, "Freeing." After years of being enslaved by his illnesses, he has found liberation in sharing his story and has liberated others by creating a support system for those who are afraid to "come out."

He's My Brother, Inc. showed a video, Kevin's Room, at a public screening and held a discussion following the event. To access Vester's chat room or receive additional information for He's My Brother, Inc., please go to [www.hopedc.org/hmb.html](http://www.hopedc.org/hmb.html).

A place to call home, in all senses, is life-giving. "It helped me grow," Vester said of his time with Project PLASE

## Project PLASE, Inc.

### MISSION

Project PLASE (People Lacking Ample Shelter & Employment) addresses homelessness by providing transitional and permanent facilities and supportive services to homeless adults, particularly the most vulnerable and underserved (i.e., people with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, addictions, developmental disabilities, ex-offenders, etc.) and by treating the whole person and empowering each individual to function at the highest possible level.

### VISION

To eliminate homelessness by providing a comprehensive continuum of facilities and supportive services and by working alongside impoverished persons advocating to positively affect the causes of homelessness and poverty.

### STAFF

**Mary C. Slicher**  
Executive Director

**Veronica Purcell**  
Director of Programs

**Bonnie Rohr**  
Clinical Supervisor

**Shenaz Malik**  
Director, Communications & Development

**Piper-Leigh Daniels**  
Volunteer Coordinator

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Newsletter submissions and comments may be sent to Shenaz Malik at [smalik@projectplase.org](mailto:smalik@projectplase.org) or 410.837.1400 ext. 15.

## PLASE Picnic 2003

PLASE clients and staff gathered on June 27, 2003 to celebrate PLASE's annual picnic. This year we ventured away from the usual Druid Hill site to picnic at Sandy Point State Park. Everyone enjoyed the beach and good food on the beautiful June day. Children played on the shore and in the water while others sought out shade. It was a fun-filled day of relaxation away from city life. The picnic was such a success that only moments after they left everyone wanted to go again! ||



## PLASE Nests with Orioles

Fans roared as the Orioles beat Anaheim 8 to 4; but the biggest victory of all was the delight and enjoyment experienced by the staff and clients of Project PLASE. Munching on hot dogs and hanging on to souvenirs, they cheered at good catches, strong hits and amazing plays. But no roar was heard louder than the one following the scrolling "Project PLASE, Inc." as it lit up the scoreboard. The miracle of the event is that, for one evening, the struggles of everyday life fell aside as everyone enjoyed a baseball game on a summer evening. ||



# Executive Director Completes Knott Foundation Fellowship

It is with great gratitude to the Knott Foundation Nonprofit Leadership Initiative that Project PLASE announces the graduation of its executive director, Mary C. Slicher, from the initiative's fellowship program.

On May 15, 2003, leaders from twenty area non-profits reflecting the priorities and values of the Knott Foundation completed this intensive Graduate Certificate course. Fellows represented issues such as homelessness, poverty, children's issues, and education. Through the Knott Foundation Initiative, these leaders were able to explore some of the best academic thinking and research currently available in the non-profit arena. "The academic aspect of this course was very beneficial," comments Mary, "but the practical application is what will continue to be invaluable to strengthening PLASE at every level for years to come." ||

## PLASE Highlights

- » In the past year, PLASE served 348 clients in our Transitional and Emergency Shelters.
- » 73% of the clients we have served in our shelters have HIV/ AIDS
- » PLASE filled their shelter beds to 96% occupancy in FY 03
- » January 2003 marked the first anniversary of our 1814 building. The beds are regularly filled and the residents have responded well to the added support this facility provides — many have moved into permanent housing and have reconciled with family.
- » 51% of PLASE's transitional and emergency residents have moved from temporary housing into permanent housing in the past year.
- » PLASE has been very fortunate this year — receiving donations and volunteer services from Johns Hopkins University, Proctor & Gamble, Starbucks, United Way and many others! ||

## Many Thanks to Our Generous Donors

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Pipe Vine, Inc.  
St. Agnes Church  
St. Bernadette Parish  
St. Joseph Passionist Monastery Church  
St. Jude Shrine

# The Gift of Giving

Supporting Project PLASE's continuing efforts to meet the needs of Baltimore's most vulnerable homeless adults can be done in a variety of ways ...

## Financial Support

We always welcome your financial support.

- ▶ Do you know someone who is celebrating a birthday or anniversary? Someone who is just a really great person? Instead of buying that person a gift, make a cash contribution in their honor to Project PLASE. We will send them a card notifying them that a gift has been given in their name.
- ▶ Memorial gifts are another great way of honoring someone who has been very close to you, your family or the community. Send a cash contribution in honor of that person and we will send a card to the family notifying them of the memorial gift made in honor of their loved one.
- ▶ Make a monetary contribution to Project PLASE. You can designate the particular program or building you would like your donation to fund. Or you can mark your contribution as unrestricted and let us allocate it appropriately.
- ▶ Does your employer have a matching gift program? If you are not sure, you can contact your Human Resources department and they will give you the paperwork. Send the paperwork to us with your contribution and we will do the rest. For every dollar you donate, your employer will match at a designated level. What better way to make your contribution to a great cause go even further?

- ▶ Designate Project PLASE as a recipient in the United Way of Central Maryland giving campaign. Our United Way number is 0141.

For further information, contact Shenaz at 410-837-1400 ext. 15 or [smalik@projectplase.org](mailto:smalik@projectplase.org)

## In Kind Donations

We gladly accept household items and furniture in good condition, clothing and accessories, food, personal hygiene items (soap, razors, shampoo, shaving cream, toothpaste, toothbrushes), VCR tapes, exercise equipment and Christmas gifts.

We can arrange to have large quantities of donated items picked up with our van.

For further information, contact Piper at 410-837-1400 ext. 19 or [pdaniels@projectplase.org](mailto:pdaniels@projectplase.org)

## Volunteer

We need you and all your talents! Some examples of ways you can help are: repairs or oil changes to the van, cook a meal, teach computer skills, teach art, lead an exercise program.

For further information, contact Piper at 410-837-1400 ext. 19 or [pdaniels@projectplase.org](mailto:pdaniels@projectplase.org)

▶ To donate, please contact Shenaz at 410-837-1400 ext. 15

▶ To volunteer, please contact Piper at 410-837-1400 ext. 19

# The Gift of Giving

<input type="checkbox"/> (1,000 & above) Hope Society	Name: <input type="text"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/> (\$100 - \$249) Friend of PLASE	Home Phone: <input type="text"/> Work Phone: <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> (\$1 - \$99) PLASE Supporter	Email: <input type="text"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to give my time. Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.	Gift given in memory/honor of: <input type="text"/>
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▶ Project PLASE, Inc. is a 501(C) (3) not-for-profit organization, contributions to which are tax-deductible in accordance with the law. A copy of our latest financial statement is available upon request by contacting Project PLASE at 1814 Maryland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21201. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State, State House, Annapolis, MD 21401 for the cost of copying and postage.

To support the food, shelter and services Project PLASE provides for homeless men and women, I am enclosing a gift of \$

## TECH TALK

### Introducing PLASE Dot Org

Late fall is going to be an exciting time for Project PLASE. After many months of hard work by our Tech Committee and web developers, our new website will be launched.



The all new  
[www.projectplase.org](http://www.projectplase.org)  
is coming soon!

The new website will have important information about Project PLASE: services offered, community resources, an events calendar and an online gallery of our clients' artistic work. Additionally, you will be able to access our Annual Reports, Board information, as well as information about contributing to PLASE.

Please visit us online at [www.projectplase.org](http://www.projectplase.org) after December 1, 2003! ||

## Save The Date!

### OPEN HOUSE & HOLIDAY RECEPTION

Come help us celebrate the holidays! Project PLASE would like to invite you to ...

*An Open House & Holiday Reception  
on  
December 16<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 to 6:00 pm  
at  
1814 Maryland Avenue*

### MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY CELEBRATION

And don't forget, we'll also be celebrating ...

*Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
on  
January 16, 2004, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm  
at  
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
(20<sup>th</sup> & St. Paul Streets)*

Each year, Project PLASE honors the work of Dr. King with a special program and reception. More information and a program schedule will be posted on our website in mid-December. ■



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