

PLASE & POINT

Summer 2009

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1814 Maryland Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21201
Tel: 410.837.1400
Fax: 410.837.6130
www.projectplase.org

Our Mission

Project PLASE, Inc. addresses homelessness by providing transitional housing, permanent housing and supportive services to homeless adults. We serve the most vulnerable and underserved, including persons with mental illness, HIV/AIDS, addiction, developmental disabilities and ex-offenders.

We treat, restore and rehabilitate the whole person. We empower each individual to function at the highest level possible.

Our Vision

Eliminate homelessness.

Obstacles can Be Overcome!

After a lifetime of being told by teachers and tutors that she would never learn to read or write, 55-year-old client Dorothy is proving everyone wrong. She joined PLASE's GED class just 3 weeks before the end of its second session and has since learned to recite the abc's in sequence and to read, write and spell several words. Fellow client and student Jocelyn has been tutoring Dorothy for the past 3 years and she brought Dorothy with her to PLASE's GED class in hopes that it would help Dorothy start reading. Dorothy's father and stepmother never read and she is driven by a desire to break this cycle. She hopes to read to her grandchildren by Christmas time. Teacher of the class, volunteer Connie Moore, refers to Dorothy as "unstoppable."

The GED class meets every Tuesday and Thursday in the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) lounge from 9 to noon with Ms. Moore to go over math, language, writing, and computer skills to prepare for their GED test. Seven students participated in this session of the program and ten are signed up for the third session, which began in July.

Ms. Moore believes that the success she has had in reaching her students is because of the atmosphere she

creates in the classroom. She lets each of the students work at their own pace and makes sure that everyone feels comfortable and respected. She said, "I see all my students as adults capable of learning anything.

Sometimes they can't see themselves that way, but I see their potential."

She notes that a lack of self-confidence and shame are the biggest challenges facing the clients. Sometimes she sees her students are overcome with a feeling that they just don't deserve an education and "at some point the emotions are so powerful that [the clients] just drop out."

One student, Josephine, said that the GED class has taught her that, "Obstacles can be overcome." When clients become overwhelmed by their challenges, Ms. Moore tries to offer them some hope. "We aren't the only ones with tragedies and obstacles. Everyone has something positive to offer others," she said.

Ms. Moore is in the process of expanding the reach of the program through adult basic literacy training. Kim will be the first student to train with Ms. Moore and she is looking forward to it: "Lots of people have supported me and now I want to give back."

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Connie Moore (far right) and students at the GED Session 2 Luncheon

EVERY DONATION COUNTS

ON THE ROAD AGAIN



Michael La Bua, Director of Housing, driving the PLASE van

Thanks to a generous volunteer trained in auto repair who was willing to donate his time and energy, the PLASE van is back on the road! Our van helps us to transport clients and pick up in-kind donations of food and clothing for our clients in transitional housing and furniture for our clients in permanent housing.

If you would like to donate food, clothing, furniture or gently used purses for next year or any other in-kind donation, please contact donate@projectplase.org!

PURSES FOR PLASE

Project PLASE would like to thank the Girl Friends Inc. Baltimore Branch as well as the volunteers and staff who helped with the Purses for PLASE booth at the 92nd Annual Flower Mart on May 1 and 2, 2009

in Mount Vernon. Our booth sells donated gently used purses and gives us an opportunity to reach out to the Baltimore community. The festival was well attended and fun and the PLASE booth was a success!!



Use **Designation Code 8141** for the Combined Federal Campaign and Maryland Charity Campaign. Use **Designation Code 141** for United Way of Central Maryland Campaign.

Obstacles Can Be Overcome!

(CONTINUED FROM COVER PAGE)

Ms. Moore hopes that Kim will teach others, within and outside of PLASE. Ms. Moore said, "If I can train them to train others, they can start teaching in their communities and we can reach more people."

Connie Moore believes that both the teacher and the student must be committed and invested in the learning process to see progress. She sees the clients growing and letting her help them more and more as she earns their trust through her consistency. "If I'm

absent or late, they know something is wrong," she said. "And if they're not here, I know there's a good reason."

PLASE has had other GED programs throughout the years, but Ms. Moore is leading our most successful program yet. She believes that it takes loyalty and trustworthiness to succeed as a teacher. She said, "It may take years before some of my students are ready to take the GED test. They ask me if I'll be here. I tell them that I'll be here as long as I'm breathing."

Special Announcement!

Save the Date

to help celebrate and support the
35th Anniversary Gala of Project PLASE
on
Saturday, November 14, 2009

evening of festivities to include
Reception, Dinner, Magician, Music and Dancing
location
Tremont Grand, Baltimore, Maryland

LAUGHTER AND TEARS

Many laughs and tears were shared at the GED awards luncheon on Tuesday June 9th, as students were recognized for their progress and commitment in the class. Each student shared what they "know now that they did not know before" and what they hope to achieve in the next session of the class.

One student recited the 7 continents and then quizzed the audience. Other clients mentioned math, computer and essay writing skills that they had learned in the class. The students also discussed the importance of a peer-to-peer learning community, particularly the respect, patience and compassion it takes to create an environment where everyone can learn.

One student, Kim, has already passed three

sections of the GED test and hopes to finish the rest in the fall and eventually assist Ms. Connie Moore in teaching the class.



Ms. Moore awards Dorothy a certificate for progressing in reading and vocabulary

Andy Dubosky, Director of Communications and Development at PLASE, shared a few words recognizing the hard work of each of the clients and expressing gratitude to Ms. Moore.

He noted that teaching requires that you give all of yourself to your students, and judging by the success of the class and the closeness of the group, Connie has certainly given herself over to her students.

Students presented Ms. Moore with a framed picture of roses and one student said, "We wanted to get you flowers, but we didn't want them to die." Ms. Moore laughed, responding that it was the perfect gift because she always forgets to water her plants!



Teaching Them Moore

Ms. Moore, committed and deeply valued teacher, volunteer and friend of PLASE, has set out to prove that our clients have the capacity to achieve anything they set their mind to. In February 2009, she started teaching GED classes at PLASE two days a week, three hours each session, and it has reached clients in ways they never believed possible. For some clients, that means preparing for college and for others that is discovering passions, such as client Jocelyn's dream to work with special needs students.

Ms. Moore has a Master's degree in Education from Philadelphia Biblical University. She has been a teacher for over thirty years, working with students from elementary to college level. Throughout her life, she has offered tutoring to people in their homes free of charge.

Outside of PLASE, Connie teaches reading and math at an adult literacy center. She is also enrolled in a certification program with the Society of Certified Adjunct Faculty Educators to advance her teaching knowledge, strengthen her pedagogical skills and become more effective in working with adults.

Ms. Moore was motivated to work with PLASE's GED program because she senses that the nation is facing an educational crisis. She wants to impact the high illiteracy rate in Baltimore and open doors for our homeless clients as they integrate back into society.

"I feel like I was sent here," she said. "I am filled with joy to see the determination and success of the class. People would not believe what is happening."

HOLISTIC LIZ

Project PLASE welcomes our newest outreach counselor Liz O'Donnell, who joined the staff in November 2008. She works with men and women in one of PLASE's permanent housing programs, the Single Room Occupancy unit.

Liz received her Masters in Counseling and Psychology from Loyola College. She previously worked in human services as a counselor, and as a medical coordinator at an assisted living home. Her passion is working with people dealing with mental illness and drug abuse.

As an outreach counselor, she works with clients to help them maintain their housing and connect to resources they need. She acts as both a friend and a mentor to the clients. Liz describes counseling as "sharing a journey with another person."

She approaches counseling and rehabilitation holistically, nurturing clients and helping them to heal mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. Liz

works holistically because this approach allows her to address a client as a total package and not a person with just physical issues, or a person with just mental issues and thus she can impact every aspect of their health and well-being.

Liz has gained a lot of insight into homelessness and HIV/AIDS during her time at PLASE that she would like to share with the world. She believes that our society fosters many misconceptions about these issues and she intends to write a book about her experiences. She said, "The people we work with are no different than other people. These people want the same things as everyone else. They've just had the misfortune of having conditions that have made that difficult for them to achieve."

While many of the clients have experienced a tremendous amount of challenges, Liz is inspired by the resilience she sees in her clients.



Liz enjoys playing flute at PLASE events

She said, "When you see someone who others have given up on able to move on with their lives, it's a wonderful and beautiful thing." She believes that the success of our clients is a testament to the strength of the human spirit. Ultimately, all she can do is offer herself as a guide and a listening ear, and the rest is up to the clients. Often, that is all they need.

PLASE's success in preventing recurring homelessness is due to the hard work of outreach counselors like Liz, who create sustainable relationships with former clients by continuing to work with them after they have left transitional housing.

A MAN OF FEW WORDS: LIZ SHARES HER EXPERIENCES WORKING WITH A CLIENT

"When I began working with Michael Dungee in November 2008, he was a little wary of me. We would joke later about how he was holding the jury out on me.

"Over time, I came to thoroughly enjoy working with him. Although I had not known him long, I could see that he had built a strong foundation for his recovery, and I saw that Michael was deeply committed to continuing on the path of healing and independence. In turn, Michael came to realize that he could trust me to help him achieve his goals, and I thank him for giving me that trust.

"I have not experienced Michael as a man of too many words, but when he shares his story, he gives an honest rendition of his life experiences. I remember when he addressed us all at his farewell party: 'When I got here to Project PLASE, I was tore up from the

floor up,' he said. He told us about how sick and near death he had been, and how grateful he was to have his life back.



"Michael came to PLASE in June, 2006. His health was extremely compromised and he had difficulty seeing and walking. As with many of our clients, Michael's future was quite uncertain. His life hung in the balance, and the road to recovery was not a smooth one.

"After 11 months of hard work in Transitional Housing, Michael was ready to make his move in

May of 2007 to PLASE's Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing program where he could stay as long as he needed to. Michael continued to grow stronger with each passing day. He attended NA meetings several times a week and worked hard on his recovery. His health improved to the point that he recovered his ability to walk. His sight also improved. Michael had, as they say in the rooms, a new lease on life, and he was taking full advantage of his second chance.

"After 1 year and 10 months of living in the SRO and working on himself, Michael was ready to leave PLASE's permanent housing. In early March 2009, Michael found and moved into an apartment and was thrilled to have a place of his own. He still comes by to visit PLASE, and he always has a smile on his face. And though he still has his work to do, I am confident that Michael will continue to move forward, serve as an example to others and demonstrate the power of hope."

35 Years!

In 1974, a group of concerned students set out to form an organization that would address the needs of Baltimore's homeless. 35 years later, PLASE has expanded to serve over 450 clients in transitional and permanent housing.

KEY STAFF

Mary C. Slicher
Executive Director

Scott Wolgamuth
Controller

Michael La Bua
Director of Housing

Bonita Rohr
Director of Transitional Housing

Dr. Nancy Connor
Director of Programs

Andy Dubosky
Director of Communications and Development

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Project PLASE is
a nonprofit you can trust

SUMMER WITH A SIZZLE!

Clients kicked off the summer with a sizzling BBQ on

June 26, 2009! Mike Coram, Life Skills Counselor, grilled hamburgers and hot dogs to go with potato salad, chips, watermelon, chocolate cake and soda. Clients, staff and volunteers from all 4 of PLASE's facilities came together to eat, listen to music, chat, play cards and enjoy a warm afternoon in the sun. PLASE would like to thank Tiffany Bryant, Volunteer Coordinator, and Roz Russell, Outreach Counselor, for organizing the event!



PLASE offers clients a variety of events every year, ranging from baseball games and trips to the beach, to movie nights and picnics.

These activities give clients the opportunity to build a supportive community and socialize with one another.

One of a client's best resources for recovery is support from other clients, particularly those who have faced similar challenges. Each of our clients is at a different stage in their rehabilitation and they all have something to offer one another and the community at large. Our socialization activities aim to aid clients in progressing towards reintegration into society, one step at a time.

Volunteers and resources permitting, PLASE also offers art therapy, writing classes, and fitness and well-being classes. Recently, an advanced yoga therapeutics instructor has come forward to offer yoga classes at PLASE, which will begin in August. Volunteers greatly enrich our PLASE! To offer your time, energy and skills, please email us at volunteer@projectplase.org.

DOWN ON THE FARM

Bright and early on a cool, drizzly June morning, PLASE staff members journeyed out to Reisterstown, MD for another day down on the farm. Garden Harvest, a not-for-profit organic farm with a mission to alleviate hunger and improve the nutrition of the economically disadvantaged, has offered PLASE a plot of land with their innovative Adopt-a-Plot Program.

Garden Harvest created the program in response to the economic recession, as the need for emergency food increases. The program allows participating organizations to prepare the land and plant seedlings in their designated plots, and the farm helps by maintaining the crops until harvest. Our clients will receive all of the produce from PLASE's plot.

On the recent June morning, as the drizzle turned into pouring rain, we planted 100 Roma tomato seedlings and enjoyed a muddy day out of the city. We hope to return in the coming weeks to plant eggplants and peppers. If you are interested in volunteering with PLASE at Garden Harvest, email farm@projectplase.org.



PLASE staff and volunteers hard at work!

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PAID
PERMIT NO. 6950
BALTIMORE, MD

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Baltimore, MD 21201
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