

PLASE & POINT

WINTER 2011

Published by Project PLASE (People Lacking Ample Shelter and Employment)



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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.

Our Vision

To eliminate homelessness.



Please designate Project PLASE at your workplace using the following codes:

- United Way of Central Maryland **141**
- Combined Charity Campaign **8141**
- Maryland Charity Campaign **8141**
- Combined Federal Campaign **56982**

REFLECTIONS

Mary C. Slicher, Executive Director

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."
Martin Luther King, Jr.

PLASE hosted its 12th Annual Martin Luther King celebration with its first female keynote speaker. The inspiring words of Dr. Carla Hayden, Enoch Pratt Free Library CEO, highlighted the courage of Rev. King. Because of his great personal struggles including depression, exhaustion, and the murder of his mother, his full humanity and legacy is all the more compelling to us today, 43 years later. Each of us is called to live their "greatness" despite our human weaknesses and know that someone who came before has paid the price for us to do so. In the wake of the Tucson killings, the call for understanding, love and respect of the other is all the more vital. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. *"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.... We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."*

At PLASE we continue to see this hope lived out in the lives of seemingly ordinary but, in our eyes, extremely courageous people who change their lives.



Mary C. Slicher, Executive Director and Betty Patterson, Senior Outreach Counselor

- Last year 95 persons from PLASE moved out of homelessness into their own community based residences!
- Four women who were unable to read are successfully climbing that mountain and are even going for GED certificates. Ten men are starting that process.
- Many of our residents began a healing process overcoming for the first time the deep scars of physical, mental and sexual trauma.
- 200 households (including 70 children) maintained themselves in homes in the community, many for over 10 years and continue to grow in reaching further life goals.

The PLASE staff and volunteers receive hope and enthusiasm from these life transformations! Through these transformations, hope and new vision abound. *"Everything that we see is a shadow cast by that which we do not see."* Martin Luther King, Jr.

Happy New Year all! It is not just winter but the early beginnings of new life ALL around us! Peace! We look forward to 2011!

ANNETTE'S SUCCESS STORY

Here is a story of a woman who has suffered trauma, abuse and tragedy, but has overcome it all to begin to fulfill her dreams and live up to her potential. Ms. Annette grew up in Philadelphia where her mother raised her and her sisters. Her mother was working two jobs, so many of the household responsibilities fell onto Annette's shoulders at a young age. Trying to fit in with her peers, Annette fell into a bad crowd and she started to abuse alcohol as a teenager.

After graduating high school and starting trade school, she got into a relationship that soon turned abusive, the more so after having children. The abuse continued and Annette retreated into herself using drugs to relieve the torment, pain and isolation of her situation. It got to the point that she was unable to take proper care of her children. Then ensued an extended period of drug abuse, self-destructive behavior and chronic homelessness.

After moving to Baltimore, Annette descended into a spiral of joining treatment programs, becoming clean, and then abusing again; eventually she made the life-changing decision to start over. She got into an Intensive Outpatient Program and was referred to a bed at Project PLASE. Adjusting to transitional housing at

PLASE wasn't easy for Annette, who now freely admits that "when I first got to PLASE I was upset about the six o'clock curfew!"

If it wasn't for PLASE, I don't know where I would be now.

But once placed into PLASE's permanent housing Single Room Occupancy program, she quickly found her feet and was accepted into the Medical Assistant program at the Medix School in Towson. Shortly after this encouraging new beginning she was faced with two devastating personal losses: her mother and son passing in quick succession. But Annette refused to lose control. She went to bereavement counseling, and held steadfast to the structure that had kept her safe, stable and no longer vulnerable. In the end she stuck with the program and even maintained her 3.76 grade point average. "God has blessed me" she says, understanding that her life has moved on to a new stage. About to move into her own apartment and excited about her upcoming graduation in May, Annette says, "If it wasn't for PLASE, I don't know where I would be now. PLASE helped me, gave me a chance to know myself, communicate and know others." After graduation, Annette will do her externship and plans to get her Medical Assistant Certificate later this year. All of us at PLASE are proud of Annette's achievements!

STUDENTS SPEND ONE NIGHT WITHOUT A HOME

On a cold and rainy night in November, 75 college students gave up their warm beds, roofs over their heads, and all the comforts they are used to living with. These students spent one night without a home on Towson University's campus to have a better understanding of the plight of our 3,400 (as found in Baltimore City 2009 Point In Time Survey) homeless neighbors in Baltimore.

The night was packed with speakers, discussions, service projects, and activities giving the participants a glimpse into the lives of those experiencing homelessness and a channel to grapple with social justice issues. Participants heard from several individuals who have personally experienced homelessness including one of their fellow students, whose story was both heartbreaking and inspiring. After opening her heart to her peers, this individual expressed "thanks for letting me share my experiences. Awareness is the key to change, so I'm glad you [planning committee] did this." After hearing from a panel of formerly homeless individuals, **Tiana Spruill**, a Towson University student participant, noted that she "cried [her] eyes out, but was truly inspired and moved!" Tiana also expressed her eagerness to become more involved in the issue of homelessness in Baltimore.

The event was planned by a committee of dedicated students and faculty from Baltimore colleges along with Project PLASE staff and volunteers. **Elsa Lankford** and **Brian Plow**, assistant professors at Towson University, encouraged their 'Social Action in the Arts' class to spend a large portion of their semester for the planning of this



While trying to stay warm, students reflect on their experience of spending one night without a home, in breakout discussions.

event. Several student organizations also participated in the planning including Active Minds at Towson University. President of Active Minds, **Chrissy Richardson**, expressed, "this event was truly life changing and extremely moving!"

One Night Without A Home was seen as a success by all. Service Learning Coordinator at Towson, **Katelyn Victor**, said "One Night Without A Home was a great success. It was exciting to see so many people rallying around the issue of homelessness and working together to make a difference." Working together is exactly what the students did, from preparing 200 PB&J sandwiches and 100 hygiene kits, to planning and executing post-event fundraisers for Project PLASE and other homeless service providers.

One Night Without a Home had a deep impact on many who attended. One participant, **Sarah Jordan** from Towson, reflected on the experience: "After 24 hours at school, I am now showered and out of the elements. I will always remember being on the ground in the cold and rain. Not all people who are homeless are druggies or criminals but some are victims of circumstance. So always love your family, keep friends close, and help others. If you are not abused, and have food, clothes and a warm home, hold tight to your privileges." The event touched Sarah on a deeper level, as she went on to explain, "since [One Night Without A Home] I feel something different inside me whenever I see a homeless person." Project PLASE is very appreciative to all of the students and faculty who came together to spend one night without a home.



PLASE Volunteers: Back row: Sarah, Mary, Andy; Middle: Hope, Millicent, Kendra; Front: George, Lauren, Kerry, Jordan (and Mike took the photo!)

PLASE GOES LIVE

On December 6th eleven staff and volunteers from PLASE headed over to Maryland Public Television's studios to answer phones for an MPT pledge drive. In between telephone calls, the PLASE volunteers got to enjoy the premiere of "Airplay: The Rise and Fall of Rock Radio," a documentary about the struggle between deejays and business interests for control of what music is played on the radio.

During a break, our own **Mary Slicher** was given the opportunity to talk about the work we do at PLASE. This is especially exciting because every time "Airplay" runs on any public television station in the United States you can see Mary's interview and the rest of the PLASE volunteers answering phones! We're thrilled we had the opportunity to spread the word about PLASE nationally.

ZUMBA® JAM FOR PLASE!

Supporting a good cause can come in many forms—dance forms that is! Participants of a Latin-based cardio dance workout class, ZUMBA®, supported Project PLASE during the holiday



Tracy Volk, instructor at Fit! Gym, shows her support for PLASE.

season in an extended workout jam one Friday evening in December. The ZUMBA® class, sponsored by **Tracy Volk** of Fit! Gym, brought in over \$400 worth of gift cards that were used as holiday gifts for Project PLASE clients. In exchange for a fun night of high energy dancing, participants were asked to donate \$10 gift cards

along with winter items such as coats, gloves, and blankets. All gym members were involved in the winter items collection, which helped keep PLASE clients warm during the coldest months of the year. This successful event was made possible by the dedicated and compassionate staff at Fit! Gym. PLASE is especially appreciative to Tracy Volk for her hard work in support of the homeless.

For more information on Fit! Gym and ZUMBA®, please visit fitgymusa.com.



Zumba® participants jamming the night away.

NEW FACES AT PLASE

JOCELYN'S TRANSITION

Jocelyn Tillman, a Baltimore native, is Project PLASE's new Director of Transitional Housing. Jocelyn has an MSW (Master of Social Work) and a background in working with clients suffering from chronic mental illness, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse and homelessness. She first heard about PLASE when she was an HIV/AIDS counselor at the Evelyn Jordan Center at the University of Maryland.



Jocelyn Tillman, new Director of Transitional Housing

A primary focus that Jocelyn brings to her work is empowering each client to be independent in all aspects of their life. So far, she has found that some clients need quite a bit of motivation, while others are just in need of a little encouragement to do what they already know they have the potential to do. Settling in fast, Jocelyn says: "What I enjoy most about my work at PLASE is the blend of being an administrator and applying my social work skills with clients."

Jocelyn's personal long-term goal is to be a mental health therapist. She has always had an ear to listen and the heart to give assistance to individuals in need. As far as more immediate goals in 2011, Jocelyn states that she is really interested in serving on boards, and being more involved in the community as it relates to serving clients.

SIMON'S STORY

In the heart of Project PLASE there is a young man from Berlin, Germany who is effecting change for many people in Baltimore who are without a home. **Simon Brendel** is six months into his year-long overseas volunteer service as the Intake Coordinator at PLASE facilitated by the Brethren Volunteer Services.

Simon, 20, says he was a shy kid growing up, but he has found his self-confidence here answering the phone to dozens of homeless people every day, and assisting them in their search for transitional housing, healthcare resources or emergency services. After most weekends, Simon comes in to the office to find a stack of voice messages from men and women seeking housing. His phone is rarely quiet but his manner is always courteous and attentive. A co-worker, and PLASE's grants administrator, **Millicent Aymold**, claims that Simon is one of the most gracious and cordial of all the colleagues that she has worked with over the years. "Simon really is doing a remarkable job, from the get-go!" He placed over 60 people in housing in his first 3 months and regularly answers over 150 inquiries a month.

Of course it would be wonderful to be able to offer housing to every homeless person who calls, but even with 65 beds at PLASE available for veterans, people living HIV/AIDS, and the medically fragile, Simon dreads the inevitability of having to turn some people away. Project PLASE is often their first choice in reclaiming their lives through housing and supportive services. He is somewhat comforted by the depth of resources that PLASE is able to refer callers to. As Simon's voice is usually the first encountered by a homeless person calling for help, he often gets to hear the tragic incidents behind each story of homelessness and desperation. There are so many causes for homelessness and Simon admits to being amazed by the impressive lives led by clients before they tumbled precipitously into homelessness and crisis.

Looking ahead to his return to family and friends in Germany, further studies, and hopefully a career in communication design, Simon says he will miss the "American feeling" of open-mindedness and politeness. He used to dislike practicing English in school, but he has found it to be a very handy tool for his work here, and of course he will miss how it has helped him help others.



Simon helps connect homeless men and women with community resources in Baltimore.

BALTIMORE CITY EMERGENCY SHELTER

One result of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness in Baltimore City, also known as "A Journey Home," is a new emergency shelter to open on Fallsway, at the edge of the Mount Vernon district. The opening of the shelter will follow the closure of the emergency shelter on Guilford Ave. While less space will be available for those in need of shelter, this facility will feature actual beds, as opposed to mats still being used at the Guilford location. Another important aspect to this shelter is that the Mayor's Office of Human Services officials will move their office into the shelter, increasing visibility and liability for the services provided. The shelter is scheduled to open in March 2011.

PLANNED GIVING

Have you thought of making a bequest to PLASE in your will?

Because you care about ending homelessness please consider including PLASE as a beneficiary in your estate plans: Project PLASE, Inc. Federal tax ID: 23-7367331 Call 410.837.1400 x15 info@projectplase.org.

KEY STAFF

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Project PLASE is a nonprofit you can trust

YOUR USED CAR COULD HELP THE HOMELESS



You know that old car that you've wanted to get rid of, but instead it has been sitting in your driveway for months? Well now its worth can go towards providing safe and stable housing, clothing, food, and supportive services to the homeless in Baltimore!

Project PLASE has partnered with V-DAC: Vehicle Donation to Any Charity which converts donated cars, trucks or RV's into cash donations for charities. The process is extremely straightforward and worry-free. Your car will be picked up and auctioned off and within 45-60 days, Project PLASE will receive 70-80% of the proceeds and you will receive a tax deduction and the satisfaction of knowing your car will help hundreds of people obtain housing this year. The cost to both you and PLASE is absolutely FREE and requires minimal effort.

To learn more about this opportunity please call (410) 837-1400 x15 or go online to www.projectplase.org/donate/vehicle. We hope you take advantage of this new and exciting way to support Project PLASE!

A STELLAR VOLUNTEER

One of our big fundraising activities this past fall was taking "Purses for PLASE" to a new venue – the Fell's Point Fun Festival, the largest street fair in Baltimore. PLASE's booth at Flowermart in Mount Vernon has attracted such a loyal following over the last four years, that we decided to add the Fun Fest to our schedule. Through the kindness of many groups and individuals, PLASE received over a thousand new and gently-used purses! After such an outpouring of generosity, PLASE's volunteer force sprang into action to get the purses priced and tagged in time for the Fun Fest.



Christina showed true grit!

We love all our volunteers but we must salute our stand out 'Purses' volunteer **Christina Sturgill**, a nursing student at the Community College of Baltimore County. The dedication Christina demonstrated helping with "Purses for PLASE" was above and beyond. She spent many hours prior to the festival cutting ribbons and tying them to each purse, a time-consuming and finicky job. Then, on the morning of the Fun Fest itself, despite waking up sick, Christina still came down to help out at the booth. Finally, once the Fun Fest was over, Christina sorted hundreds of purses into bins so they could be distributed at Purse Parties.

Many thanks to Christina for all her hard work this fall!

If you would like to host your own Purse Party for friends & colleagues to augment their own purse collection and raise money for PLASE, please contact Jordan at (410) 837-1400 x33.

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