

PLASE & POINT

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THE BEACON HOUSE SQUARE PROJECT *A NEW HOME*

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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.

Project PLASE has been ready to move for a few years. After looking seriously at a number of properties, we now have a new building to call home as the first step in a major expansion project.

In early August, staff members packed up everything from computers to paperclips and relocated PLASE's administrative offices to 3601 Old Frederick Road. Our new site was formerly **St Bernadine's Catholic School**, one of thirteen Catholic schools closed in June 2010. With support of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, PLASE has been able to lease and purchase the beautiful school property. The building has been updated to be usable office space, although the children's murals lining the halls are a fond reminder of its previous occupants!



PLASE's Beacon House Square project will increase housing options for Baltimore's homeless citizens

"This housing development will serve PLASE, the community and Baltimore so well."

The next few years will include tremendous changes for PLASE and our new site, as we renovate the space to create transitional and permanent housing facilities. Having purchased the property for \$1.42 million, we plan to undergo two rounds of renovations: Phase One will create **62 units of transitional housing** and Phase Two will add **36 one-bedroom permanent housing apartments**. This will launch the work of the Beacon House Square project as a place of hope and healing for many individuals and the community.

Expanded Care

As PLASE expands across the city, we are confident that the Beacon House Square project will allow for a heightened level of care. The entire development will be handicapped accessible and include a health suite, classrooms and several common spaces. This development will not only increase PLASE's capacity, it will enhance

the efficiency of the Project PLASE program, as more services will be available under one roof. The new building will include a spacious meeting hall that we look forward to sharing with the community and local groups for meetings and events.

In our new location in West Baltimore, Project PLASE will also fill a gap in the existing continuum of care. We are pleased to have Mountain Manor and My Brother's Keeper as new neighbors, and equally excited to support the

residents of this area. Long before moving here, PLASE staff had the opportunity to engage local leadership and discuss our partnership with this neighborhood.

Early Challenges

Over a year ago, our plans to move were abruptly halted. Local residents were upset and confused about the addition of a housing agency to their neighborhood and progress of the zoning variance through Baltimore City Council came to a standstill.

PLASE staff and volunteers began dialoguing with community associations, individuals, and businesses, speaking candidly about the great potential for this building and for the future of Baltimore. Slowly, those who originally opposed the move began lobbying on behalf of Project PLASE. A lot of the goodwill generated in the neighborhood can be attributed to 82 parishioners of St. Joseph's Monastery parish who spent every weekend for six months engaging with their neighbors. "They were awesome" said **Dorothy Cunningham**, President of the Irvington Community Association.

Having corrected misperceptions about the services that PLASE is actually providing, and assuaged by assurances that PLASE will continue to be a good neighbor, we now have many friends and allies in this community. We look forward to participating in many local events in the future.

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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**

VOTER REGISTRATION AT PLASE

During the height of the close Presidential election race and several contentious local initiatives, more than 15 new voters were registered at the Project PLASE voter registration drive on Oct. 4th. Residents came to register and ask questions about the voting process and stayed to discuss the most recent Presidential debate. The idea for a voter education session was first suggested at a Resident Advisory Board meeting, when members expressed concerns that other residents did not register to vote because of misinformation about voter laws and eligibility requirements. **Carlton Gross**, Chair of the Board, led planning efforts and was instrumental in the success of the event.

"I was up at 6am to get to the polls bright and early."

For residents like **Clifton Boney**, voting in this election was especially meaningful. In the past he was apathetic about the political process, but now that he's on the road to recovery, and "Starting my life over...as a productive member of society," voting has gained new significance. The Nov. 6 election was an important moment to symbolize this new beginning. Mr. Boney reflects on voting for the first time, "I was up at 6am to get to the polls bright and early. Now I have a new look on life and I'm truly excited about exercising my right to vote."

The voter registration event was only one of a series of ways PLASE encourages clients to be engaged in the political process. We look forward to future opportunities to help clients remain civically active, through events like the annual Lobby Day, when clients travel to Annapolis to meet their legislators and make their voices heard on issues that affect them.

Submitted by Allie Busching, Community Outreach Coordinator at Project PLASE through Lutheran Volunteer Corps

AWARDS OF INSPIRATION



Olivia Straub, Volunteer Coordinator, holding PLASE's 'SNOSCAR'

We are proud to announce that Project PLASE was awarded a Station North 'SNOSCAR'! This is an inaugural award presented in November 2012 by Curatorial

Practice students at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) to local organizations; PLASE won the award for 'Most Inspiring Organization!'



Johns Hopkins students gave a day of service to PLASE

In July 2012 PLASE was recognized by SOURCE (Student Outreach Resource Center at Johns Hopkins) as 'Partner of the Month' for valued nonprofit partners that offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities.

Mary C. Slicher, our Executive Director and one of the co-founders of PLASE, received a 'Heroes of Justice' award presented by the University of Maryland School of Social Work honoring 50 outstanding alumni at the 50th anniversary celebration of the School's founding.



Mary C. Slicher, PLASE's Executive Director

ART OF MANY PIECES

The side of the Men's Facility looks a little brighter these days. Thanks to the hard work of PLASE residents, volunteers, and a group called **Mosaic Makers**, there is a bright new mosaic on the corner of North Calvert Street and North Avenue.

Mosaic Makers is a nonprofit community program that aims to connect art with communities and individuals. Run by two licensed social workers, **Lauren Siegel** and **Pam Stein**, the organization does workshops on the arts, holds discussions on poverty, and recently partnered with PLASE to create a new mosaic.

The mosaic is visible from a block away, but planning for this art installation began inside when residents gathered at a meeting to give suggestions and brainstorm ideas for the creation of this piece. At this discussion, residents requested that the mosaic depict a bridge over water and suggested there be flowers and an image of the earth. Most importantly, the mosaic was to depict a message of hope. Pam and Lauren worked to transform this discussion into a sketch on paper, which was later transferred onto the side of the building with chalk as a guideline for the mosaic.

This work of community art is composed of broken dishes, mugs, old pottery and other materials donated to PLASE and Mosaic Makers for this project. The work kicked off with a "Breaking Party"



The mosaic was designed to bring a message of hope

on the patio of 1814 Maryland Avenue. Armed with hammers and gloves, volunteers smashed the materials into small pieces so they would be ready to turn into art.

As much fun as it was to break tiles, learning to turn the pieces into artwork was the best part of this project. Pam and Lauren patiently guided volunteers from PLASE and the community by demonstrating how to adhere tiles to the brick wall outside the building. For a few hours each day, a group gathered to piece together the image. Volunteers from the community worked along side PLASE residents and staff to assemble

the piece. Individuals could be seen rummaging through a whole bucket of green tiles to find the perfect shade, or carefully trying to break tiles in a way that would make them fit in a good spot. The completed work was unveiled at a July 27th sidewalk reception. "I think it is very nice," says resident **George Perry**, "it really brightens up the whole neighborhood."

This mosaic project would not have been possible without the talented and inspiring work of Pam and Lauren at Mosaic Makers, the Station North Arts & Entertainment District, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Submitted by Jasmine Arnold, Community Projects Coordinator at Project PLASE via AmeriCorps VISTA

YOU GOT TO BELIEVE: FORTUNE FAVORS THE BRAVE

A 53-year old man with a gentle creased face dressed in a casual fleece cardigan enters my office and tells me his story. **Robert Fortune** was a Baltimore construction worker who got infected with HIV in 1987. His partner at the time did not know she had the virus so how could he?

It's not going to fall out the sky; you got to believe it and work for it.

At the time Robert contracted HIV it was still considered a death sentence because of the lack of life-saving medications. Even when medications did become available, Robert says "I was always afraid of taking [them] because I believed that the medications caused illness or even led to death."

I got stuck and I never found my way back

When Robert's father passed away, he says "I had an emotional crisis in my life; I do not know how I became homeless. It was one of those things that happened gradually, but I woke up one day and I was in fact homeless. I had started using street drugs to numb all my emotions.

"The population that I found [on Charles St.] had the same problem that I had [HIV], but they accepted me for what I was. I got stuck and I never found my way back home. I wish I was a lot stronger then.

"I didn't allow myself to be found. I got lost in another dimension. If you go to certain street corners it's like another whole city.

"I saw what other people were doing; they were sleeping in old buildings, under bridges [but] they didn't even really consider themselves homeless. These people that I met were my new family. I felt closer to them than my own family who I had known my whole life. I didn't feel that they judged me; they accepted me more. No-one ever talked about [HIV]; but everyone knew that everyone was sick."

Robert was homeless for over twelve years, spanning the 1990's, and then he went to prison. After his release, Robert came to Project PLASE and began his journey out of homelessness, out of addiction and into housing: "They helped me. They got me connected with medical and with [supportive] people living with the same thing as myself. PLASE gave me the tools and structure; their counselors were very good. Then I got housing, I am living on Park Heights [in the Shelter + Care permanent housing program in my own apartment]. It's nice. It's wonderful. I am starting back from where I left off."



PLASE Client Robert Fortune: "PLASE gave me the tools"

A new life

Robert entered a job placement program and graduated with a certificate in Human Resources on October 26, 2012. He exudes confidence and self-belief: "I feel good. It's a big accomplishment; I know I could make a difference in someone's life."

And Robert wants others facing homelessness like he did to know: "There is hope. Sometimes you just got to keep pushing. I put God first and then everything else followed. [But] It's not going to fall out the sky; you got to believe it and work for it."

Sitting in my office Robert seems content not to have to travel back to those days. "At the time I felt I got cheated out of my life. Twenty something years just gone down the drain. My life was so much different." He wishes he was stronger then to have resisted the slide into homelessness, but he is glad to be stronger now and glad "that I don't have to live like that anymore."

Please help Project PLASE provide HIV education and prevention information to homeless individuals in Baltimore with housing as a foundation. At PLASE, we host several groups, including Life Skills

Groups, to support those who are living with HIV and AIDS. And all new Project PLASE residents attend HIV 101 and HIV 102 at our HIV partner organization Jacques Initiative. You may donate online at www.projectplase.org/give

Robert Fortune was interviewed by Andy Dubosky, Director of Communications & Development at Project PLASE

Project PLASE was the first homeless shelter of any description in Baltimore to open its doors and accept homeless men and women who had HIV or AIDS. This was in 1984 when information about the disease was scarce and misinformation was rampant. Since then PLASE has specialized in serving the HIV-infected homeless population in Baltimore as well as those suffering from mental illness, physical disabilities and recovering addicts

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 x115 info@projectplase.org.

KEY STAFF

Mary C. Slicher
Executive Director
Robert Ovesen
Controller
Andy Dubosky
Director of Communications and Development
Christine Strohecker
Director of Transitional Housing

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Project PLASE is a nonprofit you can trust

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A Promising Future

This is an exciting time for Project PLASE. As Executive Director **Mary C. Slicher** states, “We are so pleased to have settled on the new building. This housing development will serve PLASE, the community and Baltimore so well.”

As staff members settle into their new offices, there is still a great deal of work ahead of us. The renovations to create the residential housing will occur over the next few years. To continue to serve Baltimore’s most vulnerable citizens is what drives us and makes us an effective PLASE family.

Your support is needed! Project PLASE has secured valuable Community Investment Tax Credits (“CITC’s”) for our donors (individuals or businesses) who give \$500 or more (up to \$250K) to support this expansion project. These tax credits allow us to reward you with CITC’s that guarantee an additional credit of 50% on your personal or corporate Maryland taxes and additional credit on your federal taxes (in addition to your regular state & federal tax savings received for such gifts). To make a donation or for more info please contact us at donate@projectplase.org or tel: 410 837 1400 x115. Thank you!



PLASE staff celebrate the new acquisition

HOT, TIRED & DRAINED

As **Hurricane Sandy** passed through Baltimore some of us anxiously stayed home; but for many in the city that is impossible. For those who are homeless in Baltimore, Sandy presented challenges more pressing than losing internet access, and even created some new temporary homelessness. Here we share a piece written by **Lauren Stoler** about her experience during last summer’s heat wave, particularly timely now in the aftermath of yet another case of extreme weather that impacted millions of Americans.

“During the hottest days of the summer, my family’s air conditioning system broke down. We had never thought twice about cooling off at home on a hot day to escape the summer heat. It was just part of our lives; we took the convenience of air conditioning for granted, and then it was taken away from us. Life suddenly became unbearable. The temperature in our home increased to 95 degrees forcing us to find alternative accommodations because staying at a hotel or buying a new AC system was out of the question for us.

“Until this situation happened to my family, I had no idea what it really felt like to be homeless, even temporarily. Not having a home to live in for just a few days pulled my family apart as we could only find space to accommodate one or two of us at a time. We also have a dog. Finding space for a pet is another challenge for those suddenly displaced. Tensions between us became high, as the instability of our sleeping arrangements left us all extremely tired and irritable. We were

all hot, tired and drained, with little energy to focus on our jobs or other responsibilities. Struggling in these conditions doesn’t mean my family was lazy or incompetent. We just did the best we could under the challenging circumstances. This could happen to anyone.

“I couldn’t stop thinking about all of the homeless clients that I had met during my year volunteering at Project PLASE. How do these men and women care for themselves, or even find and maintain work when they don’t have a stable place to live? How do these men and women find the strength and willpower to make it through each day when each meal, each night’s sleep, and lack of shelter for their families is a constant struggle? I don’t know the answers to these questions, but I am grateful to have been a part of the support that PLASE offers and have a renewed sense of respect for Project PLASE and its residents who are making better lives for themselves each and every day.”

Baltimore is lucky to have been spared the worst of Hurricane Sandy’s destruction. Project PLASE buildings did not lose power or incur significant damages. We are glad to have been able to house so many people during this storm who otherwise might have been without shelter. Those still recovering in New York, New Jersey and elsewhere are in our thoughts.

Reflections on homelessness submitted by Lauren Stoler, former Community Outreach Coordinator at Project PLASE

YOUR USED CAR COULD HELP HOMELESS CITIZENS



PLASE will get cash for your clunker!

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 hassle-free. Your car will be picked up and auctioned off. 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 x115 or go online to www.projectplase.org/cars We hope you take advantage of this new and exciting way to support Project PLASE!