



HOPE RISING: *Client finds peace, future, healing*

By: J. Wassermann

As we sat together on the grass with her daughter, Sarah, Rachelle smiled and spilled her news like a mother whose daughter had just gotten engaged.

“We found transitional housing! We’ll be moving out of the shelter.”

My eyes widened with excitement with the news, yet part of me was sad. I was happy to see her moving forward, but I would miss seeing Rachelle and her 2-year-old, Sarah.

From the first time Sarah stepped foot in the office, she created her own social network. With her high-pitched giggle, constant repetition of “Hi!” and eagerness to bounce through any open door, Sarah was overflowing with energy.

From time to time, I’d watch Sarah while Rachelle had a meeting with her case worker. Babysitting Sarah was always entertaining—like the time she tangled herself in the streamers of red, yellow, and blue balloons left over from a birthday party, belly-laughing with delight.

Not only did Sarah brighten up the office like a bouquet of fresh-cut roses, but Rachelle also added a spotlight of sweetness and gentleness.

Rachelle has been transformed during her time at Bethany House.

“When I came here, I was so disturbed,” Rachelle said. “I was hopeless. I had no self-esteem. Once I got to Bethany House that changed right away. My energy is up. I’m focusing. I’m a new person.”

Prior to Bethany House, Rachelle was dealing with great pain and heaviness.

“When you trust someone with your heart and they break your heart...” Rachelle trailed off. “And you have a baby with your husband...you never thought you’d be this way. I used to love reading, but with my husband I couldn’t read or focus. Since being at Bethany House, I’ve finished four books.”

Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS QUARTER’S GAZETTE

Continued story “Hope Rising: Client finds peace, future, healing”	2
Planned Giving: What seeds will you plant?	2
Joseph’s Coat Thrift Shop: Storytelling	3
Joseph’s Coat Thrift Shop Coupon	3
Volunteers springing into action	4
Domestic Violence: Warning signs and how you can reach out	4



Bethany House of Northern Virginia is a non-profit, faith-based organization serving women and children who are homeless and destitute as a result of domestic violence.

Our CFC Code is 89071. Our United Way and CVC Code is 8268.

HOPE RISING: Finds peace, future, healing

continued from page 1

Bethany House was a refuge for Rachele to calm her heart, soul, and mind.

“I got peace with God at Bethany House,” Rachele said. “I forgot where peace is and used to say, ‘Where is God?’ God had a purpose for me being here. I learned so many things at Bethany House.”

While Rachele found all the programs Bethany House provides helpful—parenting, Christian life skills, therapy—one lesson stands out for her.

“Life is not going to be a hell,” Rachele said with tears in her coffee bean-colored eyes. “Before, life was like a roller coaster. I was gaining weight, not sleeping...”

“Peace came to me,” Rachele added, using her hands to show the peace pouring down on her. “I’m happy and smiling now. God is helping us through people.”

“Six months ago, I didn’t want to live on this earth and I thought everything was against me, but now the future is bright.”

What has added to that sparkle is the supportiveness of her family in her journey toward healing.

“My brother is so amazed how God helped me through this program,” Rachele said. “My family never thought I’d finish my four months and offered to help me, but I had to do it myself. My family is very proud of me.”

While Rachele is looking forward to the next step, she will miss Bethany House and the staff she will leave behind.

“Bethany House and the staff are my home. It’s time to move on even if I don’t want to,” Rachele said. “The reality is a lot of women need help and are looking for a place to stay. I’m looking forward to Bethany House helping other women.” One day, Rachele would like to give back.



Photo Illustration

“Since my mind is clear and I have peace, I want to change my career. I want to help other women. I’m going to take classes.”

“[In the future] I will help Bethany House because Bethany House was there for me when I needed help.”

Rachele’s heart overflows with thanks.

“I pray for donors,” Rachele said. “I don’t even know them, but I pray for them.”

“I also pray for Bethany House and women looking for help outside.”

“A lot of women out there need this opportunity. [I] thank [the donors] from the bottom of my heart. Bethany House changed my life and my daughter’s life.”

PLANNED GIVING: WHAT SEEDS WILL YOU PLANT?

By: J. Wassermann

When I hear the words “planned giving,” I sigh. While I understand the importance of thinking through how to leave a legacy behind long after my days on this earth, the actual thinking process sounds as exciting as watching my grandparents show a slideshow of their trip to Hawaii again.

Yet at the age of 22 I wrote my will because of a free workshop offered by my workplace (who am I to turn down something free?). It made me think about the future—the one I won’t be around for.

As I watch the lives of friends and family continue to march forward, I realize the value of ascertaining what is the legacy I want to leave behind. I certainly do not want others to play a guessing game at what I hoped my legacy would be. Choosing not to make decisions today means tomorrow someone else will be left to guess what seeds I wanted to plant.

Ultimately, I want to pass on a legacy of faith in God. As for my material wealth, as small as it may be, I want to consider what charity might best fit a passion I have to reach out to the poor, oppressed, and needy. I want to include future children in this legacy, but room also exists to bless others who come after me in need. Jesus died on the cross to reconcile those who would repent and believe in Him. Jesus provided salvation to those who believe—past, present, and future. While my offering is nothing compared to His, I will still follow His example to give to others for the sake of His name.

BHNV serves a unique population within the homeless—women and children who have experienced domestic violence. BHNV seeks to show God’s love, serve, and speak the Truth to these often overlooked families. Please consider designating BHNV in your bequest or planned giving.

Joseph's Coat Thrift Shop: Storytelling

We have a secret. It's a secret much like the recipes mothers pass on to their daughters after they get married — the true story behind how our struggling thrift shop became a success.

It was the summer of 2004 when DeAnn crossed paths with the founder of BHNV, Doris Ward.

Over lunch with Doris, DeAnn learned BHNV owned a thrift shop. DeAnn asked Doris to show it to her.

"I was shocked," recalled DeAnn. "It was no little store."

Indeed, the "little" thrift shop Doris mentioned is about 6,000 square feet. The average strip mall shop has 1,700 to 3,000 square feet. Within the thrift shop was a large room crammed with crates of untouched inventory.

"The Board wanted to close down the thrift shop because it was losing [money]."

With DeAnn's degree in Interior Design, she decided to help the thrift shop, named Joseph's

Coat, get back on its feet. Since DeAnn owned her own business, she volunteered as Joseph's Coat's Director. She recruited a friend and co-worker from her own business to help her undertake the task: Christina Kunz, now Joseph's Coat's Manager.

"It was a team effort," DeAnn said.

"From the beginning," added Christina.

DeAnn recruited many people to volunteer in the redesign of the thrift shop.

"It was a labor of love," DeAnn said.

"Her mom flew out," added Christina as she flipped through old pictures of Joseph's Coat DeAnn handed her. "Her daughters helped."

After knocking out walls, dismantling unnecessary fixtures, and getting rid of stuff not fitting the thrift shop inventory, the women saw the shop begin to blossom.

"Every time Doris or a Board member would come out to visit, they would be amazed I had squeezed out another section of shop space instead of using it for storage," DeAnn said, beaming.

"We put lots of sweat, blood, and tears into Joseph's Coat," Christina said.

Both DeAnn and Christina utilized their own skills in the journey toward making Joseph's Coat a success.

"Christina makes organization out of chaos everyday here," DeAnn said.

Joseph's Coat is not only in the black, but donations have more than doubled. The thrift shop provides 8% of BHNV's financial support and provides client services.

The passion driving these two women to invest so deeply is simply the cause BHNV stands for: *to serve*

women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

"The cause resonates in my heart—in my core," DeAnn said.

"Joseph's Coat is a good starting point for women to get their feet on the ground," Christina said.

"When we started out, some of the [clients] from the shelter helped us," DeAnn said. "We saw a change in the [clients] as they helped us."

"One of the [clients] became a full-time employee here, went off to school, and now has a medical career—that's the reward through thick and thin."

"Our clients reap from Joseph's Coat," said

Nadia Fraga, BHNV

Independent Living

Coordinator. "The job

training experience is

a good thing to be doing

because they're learning retail experience."

The thrift shop sees a variety of people come through their doors: mothers, savvy shoppers, immigrants, and BHNV clients.

"We have pride in the appearance of our shop," DeAnn said. "As I watch a mother with many kids in a stroller and who is pregnant shopping here, I'm glad it isn't a humiliating place for her."

Joseph's Coat has become more than "just a thrift shop" to BHNV clients, the community and the staff.

"As cheesy as it sounds, we've touched a lot of hearts," Christina said.

"Thank you to everyone who has shopped and donated to us," DeAnn said.



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Geico and City of Alexandria: Volunteers springing into action



Volunteer teams across Alexandria were springing into action on Friday, May 1, 2009.

The volunteer teams were a part of Spring For Alexandria, an event encouraging local businesses to give employees the day “off” to volunteer with co-workers at a local nonprofit. Volunteer Alexandria organized the event.

Bethany House of Northern Virginia (BHNv) received volunteer teams from two businesses in the area.

The Geico team provided serious yard work to BHNv’s largest shelter. The team transformed the outside of the shelter by pulling up dead trees, planting trees, weeding, trimming shrubs, and removing dead branches.

“This is what it is all about,” said Rynthia Rost, Geico Vice President of Public Affairs. “You can’t think you’re so important that you can’t reach back and give.”

Geico volunteers came from as far as Fredericksburg, Va., to help out.

“I love volunteer work,” said Heather Guinn, Geico employee from Fredericksburg. “People need a lot of help in the area, so why not volunteer?”

BHNv clients entering the shelter were pleased to see the volunteers making the shelter look nicer.

“I was going to take my children and weed one of the flower beds this weekend,” said a current BHNv client. “Now maybe we can plant some flowers. My children will be so excited.”

The second volunteer team served at Joseph’s Coat Thrift Shop sorting and organizing donations. The volunteer team came from the City of Alexandria’s Department of Planning and Zoning.

“It is nice to take time out to help other people,” said Iileen Oviatt, Department of Planning and Zoning employee. “Having the opportunity to [volunteer] during the work week because the city is supporting it is helpful.”

The volunteer teams made an impact in the services BHNv provides to women and children in the shelters.



Friday, May 1, 2009 — (Top left): A City of Alexandria volunteer organizes clothes. (Above): A Geico volunteer helps to replant a tree.

ABUSE WARNING SIGNS

- 1) Constant put downs
- 2) Controlling or dominant behavior
- 3) Extreme jealousy or insecurity
- 4) Explosive behavior
- 5) Isolating you from family and friends
- 6) Big mood swings
- 7) Possessiveness
- 8) Financial control

HOW YOU CAN REACH OUT

- Listen without judging; express concerns.
- Help the victim recognize abuse is more than physical (such as emotional, verbal, sexual).
- Help the victim see they are not to blame for the violence and changing their behavior will not stop the abuse.
- Help the victim develop a safety plan.
- Make it clear to the victim that violence is not acceptable.
- Assist in getting legal and other protection.
- Ask, “What can I do to help you?”

Sources: vsdvalliance.org, closerthanyouthink.org