

GRACE House Gazette

May 9, 2013

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Dear Friends,

After our long and brutal winter, summertime can't get here fast enough. The next few months promise to be busy at GRACE House. We have several things to look forward to including a community-wide painting party and several special events.

GRACE House has teamed up with the Judy Garland Museum to co-host *There's No Place Like Home* on Thursday, June 13, 2013. This community awareness event kicks off at the museum at 5:00 p.m. on the eve of the Judy Garland Festival, and features wine, light appetizers, and tours of Judy's birthplace. The event then moves to GRACE House for a soup line fundraiser beginning at 6:30 p.m. For a free-will donation, event participants will be treated to a wide array of homemade soups, breads, and pies, and tours of our homey shelter. If you're interested in making and donating soup, bread or pie, please call me at 326-2790. *There's No Place Like Home* is the perfect opportunity to help others in our community understand GRACE House's work to help individuals and families successfully transition from homelessness into stable, permanent housing. Please encourage your friends and co-workers to attend.

We are extremely excited about the prospect of installing a playground on the grounds of GRACE House this summer. ICC engineering students Mark Laughlin, Brett Ward, Jade LeCocq, Kevin Jenks, and Cody Pfeifer spent countless hours researching and designing a safe, affordable, and entertaining playground to benefit children during their family's stay at GRACE House. We are eager to bring the students' design concept to life during the playground's installation.

Having a designated, outdoor play space at GRACE House will alleviate boredom, spur imagination, and help children better adjust to their new, temporary home. Additional donations are still needed to help cover the playground's landscaping and fencing expenses. If interested, simply write the word **playground** on the memo line of your check to ensure your donation is properly earmarked.

We'll need plenty of volunteers to lend a hand when we paint the shelter's exterior, most likely sometime in late June. We'll post a volunteer sign-up form at the shelter once a date for the community painting party has been selected. GRACE House will serve up a tasty BBQ meal for volunteers who donate their time to give our shelter a much needed facelift. This event will give us the opportunity to get better acquainted with you, our trusted volunteers and supporters!

Best Wishes,

Sherry Shadley

Executive Director

Volunteer Spotlight

This month, we express our heartfelt gratitude to Simon Gretton, one of GRACE House's most active overnight volunteers. A native of England, Simon's easy-going nature and inherent empathy makes our guests feel right at home. He often stays through the morning volunteer shift to get to know our guests on a one-on-one basis. Simon is a bicycling enthusiast, devoted naturalist, and avid camper (regardless of the temperature). A paramedic with Meds 1, Simon recently volunteered his time to provide CPR & First Aid training to GRACE House's entire staff team, two board members, and five volunteers. He's committed to providing this training for GRACE House volunteers on a quarterly basis in the future. Thank you, Simon, for all you do to ensure the safety and well-being of our guests. We are truly grateful for your commitment to GRACE House and your awesome hospitality.

Important Dates to Remember:

May 18—Saturday Cooking Club (between 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.)

May 21 (6:30 p.m.) and **May 22** (1:00 p.m.) — Monthly Volunteer Support Meetings

June 10—Volunteer Orientation Training (5:30 to 7:00 p.m.).

From Homelessness To Happiness

Four months ago, Nicole was a guest at GRACE House. When she came to our shelter, Nicole was shy, guarded, and keenly suspicious; unwilling to make conversation, and unable to trust. Growing up in the foster care system exposed Nicole to ongoing and unimaginable abuse.

By the age of 16, she was living under bridges, in cardboard boxes and garbage dumpsters, and a variety of drop-in homeless shelters down South. Nicole matter-of-factly explains, "Living in various shelters, I was treated as though I had Leprosy or some other kind of disease. In other words, people treated me with disgust."

The first week at GRACE House, Nicole isolated herself in her room and resisted the staff's efforts to help her find stable housing. With support and encouragement, Nicole's seemingly impenetrable walls began to crumble. Her self-confidence grew quickly. She became talkative, playful, and eager to come back as a volunteer. Before the end of her second week at GRACE House, Nicole found her own apartment! Suddenly, she was hopeful for her future.

In the past three months, Nicole has undergone a complete transformation. She's overcome unbelievable adversity and continues to face her fears head-on. She's become a mentor to our guests, a trusted volunteer, and most importantly, an independent, self-assured woman. **Nicole has been successfully living on her own for the first time in her life.**

Nicole now enthusiastically volunteers to speak publicly to share her GRACE House experience with others. When asked why, she said, "Someone gave me a chance to be a unique individual and I plan on giving other people the same chance the staff gave me."

During a recent United Way grant site visit, Nicole relayed, "The GRACE House staff and volunteers made me believe in myself. They had faith that I could survive against all odds. They believed in me when no one else did."