



A place of help, hope & healing in Philadelphia!

***REFLECTIONS OF GRACE AND GREAT NEED
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR***



SPRING 2009

Dear Friends,

It is spring! All around us are signs of new life! For us at *The Place of Refuge*, this season is of great importance because in similar ways we have ourselves reached a time of flourishing that now brings tremendous joy into our hearts.

Finally, we have officially reached the starting line! Community Behavioral Health has welcomed us into their provider network enabling Refuge to open its doors to our targeted population—everyone who comes to us for help! So far, we are serving individuals from across the greater Philadelphia area.

The process of opening Refuge has been filled with the convolutions and vicissitudes of life – which many of you have navigated with us! We eagerly began this journey in June 2005, were all set to begin in February 2008, but were only recently recognized by the powers that be in May 2009! You can do the math. The forces hindering our start date were beyond our control.

Due to these factors, we are left with a crucial need: How to remain open between “the now” and “the future” comprising of three to six months of operational expenses. While we were successful in seeing a handful of self-pay counselees and also to receive contributories, this revenue does not take us far ahead. In order to remain open and true to our mission and outreach, ***we will need to raise between \$40,000 to \$80,000 this month.*** I ask you to prayerfully consider being a part of this challenge, and I do so with fear and trembling and yes, with tears in my eyes. You have been the Lord’s instruments in such a powerful way, and I am looking to you for one more vote of confidence in recognizing that this is the Lord’s vision, and as God’s people you will step up to the plate and give more of your gracious and loving support. We have come so far, and it would be unthinkable to shut down before we can even open our hearts and arms to a desperately broken and hurting community.

As examples of God’s grace in using Refuge thus far, I cannot begin to express how amazed I am to see the profound changes, so soon, in the few who have already come. The account of one brokenhearted mother sticks out in my mind:

A mother walks into our office with tears in her eyes—her daughter found dead on the banks of the Delaware River. For years this woman has been under the care of a counselor and a psychiatrist, but the comfort she sought was spiritual. She came to us. After she met

with one of our counselors, Rachel Vendsel, I wanted to follow up with the woman and make sure that she had found her way to our center without too much trouble, and that things had gone well. She was so grateful for the reception she received at The Place of Refuge, from all of our staff. She could not get over how soothing everything had seemed to her, how it met her emotional needs, her need for a sense of safety. She kept saying to me with such hope, “I just felt lifted up.”

We now have five clinicians regularly seeing individuals, couples and families, and we are averaging now more than 35 office visits per month. The truth however is this: *this has all just been a prologue to the story we must now ask you to help us tell.* We have another five therapists eager to serve the people in this community. We have a psychiatrist wanting very much to come and work alongside us. We have a professional social worker ready to begin her efforts here. The plans we have for the center this year are ambitious, but they are practical and effective, and perhaps most importantly, they are within our reach.

- Host additional **educational outreach** seminars throughout the area on topics including marriage, trauma, depression, and other mental health disorders.
- Provide **trainings** to community leadership, pastors and local professionals, finally equipping them with what they have been asking of us for so many years—professional resources, insights and understanding—strength—the tools to deal adequately with the deep problems they face.
- Establish more **partnerships** alongside those already seeded with Esperanza Health Center and Temple University, which we have already put into place and are beginning to bear good fruit.
- **Counsel**, on a one-to-one level to those who come to us seeking to make lasting change in their lives.
- Our target for counseling sessions by the end of the year will be **70 per week!**

Many of you know the details of this journey, the journey that has taken us to this point. In the midst of the worst recession in decades, to launch a work of this magnitude, well, it has been truly formidable. But thanks to friends like you, again and again, we have crossed obstacles that seemed insurmountable. Again and again, we managed, we were flexible, we fought and we persevered. We have now, only truly begun. But we cannot move forward without your support at this crucial time in our ministry (see our significant financial need earlier in this newsletter). Will you prayerfully consider standing with us to meet this great need by giving generously today? Your giving will help bring help to those who are devastated in the community.

With your help, we can make *The Place of Refuge* a lasting force in this community. The people we have seen already, they came to us bent and broken by the weight of hurt and trauma on their hearts. Those very same individuals are turning in hope and anticipation to become strengths, themselves. With your gift today, you can help someone like this young lady:

The first day I met with her, I could tell she was very afraid. I noticed she was timid, struggling for courage. During our time together, I came to understand the fear in her face. Her fear was caused by a painful encounter she had with a young man. She was quite confused and even before our meeting, it was clear that she had been traumatized. After numerous sessions now, she has developed an understanding that her memories were based on being wronged. Someone used her body to exert power and force and it shattered her world. Not only has she been able to understand the nature of trauma, but also the resources of her Christian faith. It became clear that the one fundamental truth for her to understand was that the wrong done to her does not define who she is today, but rather that her God holds her in the palm of his hand. This is why she can look to her future with great hope and anticipation about things to come. Although her journey will not be easy, she is committed to the hope that her memories will heal, that they will keep her in truth and in a place of reconciliation.

Everything about trauma stands against hope and anticipation for the future. It manipulates its victims, clouding their judgment, every single day. Until it is undone.

Please, our hope is that you would continue to support the work we are doing here. With the national unemployment rate soon to be one in ten, we anticipate dramatic increases in crime and hurt in communities already marginalized and long underserved.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hernandez
Executive Director

P.S. Will you help give refuge to those who are in crisis? Just use the attached response card and envelope to return your best gift of support today. Thank you!

NAME: _____

The Place of Refuge
P.O. Box 60895
Philadelphia, PA 19133-0895

THE PLACE OF REFUGE
**Putting your concern and compassion into
ACTION!**

Yes, Elizabeth! I want to help *The Place of Refuge* take action to heal the hurting people of Philadelphia through professional, trauma-informed, faith-based counseling.

I have enclosed my gift of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$_____

Sign me up to receive the eNewsletter!

My email address is: _____

Thank you for your support. All gifts will go to the ongoing work and outreaches of *The Place of Refuge*, 2938 N. 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19133. For more information, please visit our website: www.placeofrefuge.net.