

A Hard Road to Follow

Summer 2012



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Recent Highlights

- Counseling training cohort at Tenth Presbyterian from May to June
- Astonishing 30-35% growth forecast for 2012
- Counselor Sharon Mangum, M.A. completed her internship in July and is now contributing part-time
- Training on Trauma and Complex Trauma conducted at the Multicultural Wellness Center on Wyoming Avenue in North Philadelphia
- This year's new Graduate Intern to begin 20 hours per week later this month
- Panel Discussion at the Legacy Foundation Parenting Conference for struggling adolescent mothers
- Strategic Planning

He has showed you, O young man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.. (Micah 6:8)

Whenever we see a person in a wheelchair, most of us wonder what happened. Does the person have a chronic illness? Were they in an accident? Were they wounded? Was it gun violence?

Instinctively, we assess that the person's life is difficult. Rarely, can we imagine what happened to someone like Nancy (not her real name)—a woman in her mid 40's—a mother of three children and a grandmother of three.

I first met Nancy several months ago. When she came into our office, she really was afraid. Her eyes looked as if she was terrified. Immediately, she began to cry. It felt to me as if she had been holding in all her despair, and it appeared she could no longer control her tears.

I looked at her as compassionately as I could, and she then began to tell me about her sorrow. She began by telling me that she misses her mother. She died approximately 17 years ago, soon after she became paraplegic. She says what she misses most are her mother's hugs.

For Nancy, night hours are the worst, because this is when her loneliness is most acute. She has to live with many memories.

How did she become a paraplegic? you may ask. Eighteen years ago, while she was in a rehabilitation house for women, she was standing on a second floor balcony. Suddenly, someone in the program with her, who had an old grievance pushed her over the edge.

As a result, she experienced serious spinal cord injuries, which required months in a hospital and

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rehabilitation. During this time, Nancy barely kept herself alive. While she was recuperating, she found out that her mother, who was the deep love of her life, passed away.

Her life, beginning from childhood, was extremely painful.

During her early girlhood, she understood suffering. Whenever her mother had to attend appointments, she was left home with her father who drank heavily and was cruel to her. On any given day, when she was left alone with her father, he would lock her up in a room, and would not give her any food or anything to drink all day. All he would give her was a piece of bread and a

little water for a whole day. She was left at the mercy of her school classmates who would sneak food in through a window. Then later, when she became a teenager, her father put her out in the streets to sell drugs for him.

When you meet Nancy in person, she speaks very softly, almost like a whisper. What I think happened to her, is that her spirit was crushed by this man.

Many other horrific things happened to her that are unspeakable for me to write about. And yet, the resiliency in her amazes me. Nancy tells me that for the past 18 years, until she began to come to *The Refuge of Refuge*, she cried at least once, almost every day. Now, she tells me, she cries only twice each week. She has found hope.

In my last session with her, I asked her, ‘Are there things in your life for which you feel gratitude?’ I was sincerely surprised when she said that the first thing that had made her happy in a long, long time, is coming to *Refuge*. She said that she feels heard and cared for by everyone here.

She said she was grateful for her children and grandchildren, and hopeful about what her future may look like as she continues to heal. Thanks to your partnership and God's love, there is hope for Nancy.

Recent Highlights

I am very pleased to report that it looks as if we are on track to eclipse last year's mark of 1200 appointments already by the end of this month, or by early September. This will leave the remaining four months of the year to represent pure growth.

Expanding the reach of this astonishing ministry has been deeply challenging at every turn, but by the grace of God, we continue to move forward.

With the tremendous success of the 12 session counseling training intensive at Tenth Presbyterian Church in Center City completed in June and the training on Trauma and Complex Trauma held at the Multicultural Wellness Center on Wyoming Avenue in North Philadelphia, as well as four other trainings held this year, signs of a strong impact are showing on that side of our mission as well. We estimate

that from the trainings alone, almost 650 behavioral health professionals, lay-leaders and community leaders have been served through these important outreach efforts. All of this, in addition to the hundreds being served through our counseling outreach.

The Board of Directors' development of a comprehensive strategic plan is ongoing.

Refuge staff continues to expand with bilingual therapist Sharon Mangum, M.A. who served this past year as an intern with us, and now the start of our newest intern Heather Drew to begin at the end of this month.

With your support, this vital work will continue to be available to more and more suffering families.



Top: Picture of Therapist Sharon Mangum, M.A. who started at 20 hours per week in July 2012.
Bottom: Picture of Executive Director Elizabeth Hernandez from the June 22 training on Trauma and Complex Trauma held at the Multicultural Wellness Center on Wyoming Avenue in North Philadelphia.

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in Philadelphia!**

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The Place of Refuge is a 501(c)3, a non-partisan, non-profit organization that seeks to bring redemptive healing through faith-based trauma treatment and training focusing on urban populations and their caregivers.

Without your support, the crucial work we offer in one of the most distressed areas of Philadelphia will not continue.

It is our privilege and our every hope that thousands will be served here in the years to come.

**Consider a gift of
support today!**