



*A place of help, hope & healing in Philadelphia!*

## A Special Appeal

September 26, 2012

Dear Friends,

Many of you have been personally steadfast in your commitment to our ministry in North Philadelphia, and it is for this reason that I have developed the courage to write to you this special appeal. We truly have formed a kinship with you, as we consider the suffering and pain of so many of our people. Our primary motivation for our work in the city is rooted in the belief that God truly loves people—that He cares for their individual journeys and that He sees their afflictions, and we have learned that you are all part of a compassionate and caring group. We believe that if some of you could be here personally, you would carry those who cannot walk on their own. This is where we form this alliance, through your prayer and financial support, you enable those of us here—our therapists and staff, to do the work that is necessary. You may call us dreamers, but we still believe people can flourish and become what they were born to be—and we have seen that happen for over twenty years. Even now, we continue to witness people being transformed.

Let me share an example of the kind of transformation we see at The Place of Refuge. A Hispanic woman in her late fifties (I'll call her Maria, but that's not her real name) was referred to us by a local medical health center. She is the mother of three adult children and has been married for over thirty years. If you met Maria, you would agree she is a beauty and represents the absolute best of old-world values. She is fiercely committed to family and puts everyone above her own personal needs. Sadly she no longer can work, after twenty years as a factory worker. Her body is gradually deteriorating from several chronic illnesses and her bones are now being deformed by one of them. Her biggest physical challenge was a fight with cancer, and by God's grace she is well today. The emotional scars, which no one can see, are equally significant if not worse than her medical problems. But despite all these personal afflictions, she still puts her family before herself. She considers her grandchildren and even extended family as part of her responsibilities.

When I last saw her, she looked as if she had gone through some more, real suffering—I could see it in her eyes. The physical illnesses were disabling, but it was emotionally hurtful words coming from someone close to her that had really knocked her off her feet. Thanks to the anchoring support she receives at Refuge, where she is comforted and reminded of the truth of God's love for her, she was able to overcome the blow and is standing on her feet again. Before she left the session she said to me "I wish I could live here. I don't want to leave." She said "I feel so loved. When I walked in, the first person who showed me love was Michelle"—our intake coordinator—"and then the rest of the staff." Every time I walk Maria to the exit door, my heart is moved to compassion as I see how frail her body is, yet we always end our time with a smile and an embrace. Maria is typical of the people you enable us to serve. No exaggerations here.

Like many Christian non-profits we are struggling to make ends meet during these economic times. We are healthy in that growth continues consistently from month to month and has already passed last year's totals. In every corner, signs of growth are clear and striking—but while we continue to connect with local churches and foundations, we are still falling short of our goal. And without your support now, this shortfall in our budget will impact our ability to help clients like Maria.

The hurting families of North Philadelphia need our help. I know how hard things are right now for families everywhere, but to make sure that this work continues for the least of us, I must appeal to you to help us make up the difference until The Place of Refuge can become financially self-sustaining.

Today we face a serious challenge in meeting our monthly payroll. We are doing all we can to meet this challenge by seeking new avenues of funding, and working hard to bring on a new therapist and psychiatrist. We have added a new intern and are increasing our outreach efforts to more foundations and churches and are laying the groundwork for new giving options. All of this will help in the near-term, and will make an enormous long-term difference for Refuge. But we need your help now. Between now and the end of the year, we must raise an additional \$15,000 for general operating expenses, in addition to what we pay will be another strong end to the year.

If just 50 more people can find it in their hearts to pledge \$30 per month for the remainder of 2012, we can stop the immediate monthly losses and focus on what we do best—helping the hurting.

Please pray for us. And please use the envelope provided to give a gift today. You can also give online at [www.placeofrefuge.net](http://www.placeofrefuge.net) if you prefer. Thank you again.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Hernandez, M.A.  
Co-Founder, The Place of Refuge  
Executive Director  
(Doctoral Candidate 2014)

P.S.

Trauma is the mission field of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Place of Refuge is a key part of our global effort to promote and support spiritual and psychological trauma recovery, serving as a beacon of hope in urban Philadelphia.

Won't you be part of this great work by partnering with us today? Your gift will help Elizabeth and her staff bring God's healing and love to people in great need.



Diane Langberg, Ph.D.  
Founder, The Place of Refuge