

Empowerment: Being accountable. Taking ownership.

October 5, 2010

*“In this life, we can’t always do great things,
but we can do small things with great love.” –Mother Teresa*

Dearest Friends,

It’s Monday morning, and I get a phone call. The voice is a familiar one, but I’m hearing an intense fear, almost terror: “Can I speak with you?” My response: “Sure.” And she says, “No, not over the phone, but in person.”



Theresa (not her real name) is truly a survivor. As a young child, living in a rural setting, her family split, and she was given away to whomever would take her. This involved strangers, friends, and distant relatives. On any given day, she might be moved from one home to another. Her story is a succession of suffering: psychological abuse and unimaginable emotional neglect. Despite this painful history, she managed to bring up children of her own, who now are grown, and raising their own families. But her marriage only lasted for a short time. Most of her young adult life was spent in urban neighborhoods, living below the poverty line, yet she managed as best she could, providing dignity, safety, and meeting her children’s basic daily needs. She never wanted her own childhood story to be repeated with them.

Since most of her childhood years were spent unsupervised with no one to nurture her, she engaged in behavior that left her deeply scarred, with deep feelings of shame. Desperately, she sought help from other local mental health centers, but she says, “It was a waste of time. I never quite developed the level of trust and the mutual respect I needed in those experiences.”

“At Refuge, I feel totally understood and accepted,” she explains.” One day, after a session, Theresa asked me if she could remain in the office for a little while. That little while turned out to be several hours. She felt so safe that she just did not want to leave. *The Place of Refuge* has truly become her Refuge.

Remember that phone call on that Monday morning? Theresa found herself at a crossroads. Should she follow the mother’s heart inside her and submit to her daughter’s plea to relocate to a different state to live with her? Or, should she continue on the path of inner healing, with the hope of being transformed? To my utter astonishment, she chose the latter. The wounds in her soul were still very raw, and relocating would increase her sense of displacement and aloneness. “Not yet,” she said. The power of healing through her counseling at *The Place of Refuge*, along with the medical care of another, committed, Christian provider, has given her a foundation for the first time in her life.

People talk about empowerment, and part of that means someone willing to accept accountability and ownership over their own life.

But in her heart of hearts, she longed to move forward with her life, her heart with all its broken pieces, but in the process of renewal and transformation. For the first time in her life, she is seeing the ashes of her past being turned into beauty.

You, as our partners in Refuge, are making this reality possible, not only for this one brave soul, but for many, many more.

The Financial Miracle

Many of you have asked me if both Bryan and I are back on payroll. The answer is **Yes!** Five of our faithful foundations responded to our financial need, along with individual donors. On behalf of the Board of Directors, the staff, and all those who are now able to continue receiving the tremendous services here, thank you. Thank you all.

The doors of our ministry are open wide to receive the people who are asking for our help.

More Signs of Great Hope!

Open House Celebration

- ❑ **Our open house** is scheduled for November 5, 2010 from 3:00 to 8:00!!

Congratulations

- ❑ Our first graduate intern, Racquel LeDuc, M.A., **completed her graduate internship with us and graduated** from Arcadia University in May.
- ❑ We are glad to welcome **one additional graduate intern**, Nathan Swanson, from Eastern University for the fall and the coming spring semester.
- ❑ **A new bilingual counselor**, Lauren Santos, M.A. **has begun seeing a handful of clients at the Place of Refuge each week.**
- ❑ **A new part-time, bilingual intake coordinator**, Michelle Bonilla is coming on board.
- ❑ **Congratulations to Bryan Dickey for his new responsibilities** as Assistant Operations Manager! (!)
- ❑ Yin Chan, M.A., another graduate level intern of Chinese descent from Westminster Theological Seminary, successfully **completed her Mentored Ministry practicum** here as well and did very well.

Presentations & Community Outreach

- ❑ We participated in the *Convoy of Hope Fair* on Saturday 9/25, a special outreach to the people in our community. We also were **the recipients of a small grant award** for our community outreach efforts
- ❑ We **recently conducted a number of presentations** in the local community for parents, community stakeholders and local care workers.
 - Latino Culture and the Family for social service professionals at the Bucks County Family Service Association (100 attended)
 - Youth at Risk conducted in Spanish for parents at the Isaac Sheppard Elementary School in North Philadelphia (40 participants)
 - Information Table at the *Ludlow Youth Community Center's Neighborhood Fair*

- Training for the staff of the Esperanza Health Center on The Spiritual Components of Depression (100 staff participants)

Upcoming Partnerships

- Our next training session? Program? will be held at the Mexican Consulate on Managing Daily Stress to be held on Friday October 15, 2010.

Special Award

- For me, to have been selected as the recipient of the ***Dr. Orlando E. Costas Community Service Award*** from Palmer Theological Seminary for 2010, it is such an honor! The award was presented by Reverend Luis Cortez of Esperanza, Inc., on behalf of Palmer Seminary at an Award Luncheon held on October 5, 2010 at the seminary. The widow of Dr. Orlando Costas, Rose, was also in attendance, along with many other faith community leaders.

Your donation makes all the difference in the world.
Please give a gift of support today
to make sure these important impacts continue.

Respectfully,



Elizabeth Hernandez, M.A.
Executive Director

NAME: _____

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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, Christian counseling.

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

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My email address is: _____