

MERCYWORKS

always has

MERCYWORKS
1140 W. Jackson Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60607

Faith-based volunteer program of Mercy Home for Boys & Girls

tel 312-738-6369
fax 312-738-0484
www.mercyhome.org
Spring 2007

**We cannot love God unless we love each other,
and to love each other we must know each other.**

~ Dorothy Day

Between activities with the youth at Mercy Home and spending time in community, the 2006-2007 MercyWorks Community has had a very busy winter.

At Mercy Home, the past three months have been filled with all kinds of exciting activities. Talia, Cortez and Jenna were involved with Hoops to Homework. Ian, Talia and Johnathan coached IIAA basketball. And the annual Mercy Home talent show highlighted Erica and the girls of Couderc Home, who earned 1st place for their step show. Elisa's girls in Seton Home additionally swept up the 3rd place honor. Daily challenges with the youth have also encouraged community members to lean on one another on tough days, and celebrate their success stories with each other.



Johnathan and Talia led the boys to victory at the IIAA Basketball State Championship

In community life, the volunteers have challenged each other to more deeply explore aspects of the five core values of the program through community night activities. They hosted a Seder meal during lent, volunteered together at Misericordia, and attended a talk on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, just to name a few. The winter and spring retreats provided an even greater opportunity for the volunteers to reconnect with one another. The winter retreat explored issues of social justice, while the spring retreat in April

invited volunteers to plan and lead sessions focused on the topic of spirituality.

With only a few short months left in their service year, members from this year's volunteer community are beginning to make decisions about their plans for the fall. While many community members are looking to stay on at Mercy Home as full time employees next year, the MercyWorks experience is leading others to consider Graduate School programs around the country: Daria is considering the Social Work program at Boston College; Elisa is planning to attend law school at the University of San Francisco; Jenna will be in the law program at Seattle University; Cortez is weighing the option of returning to Elmhurst for policy work and inter-cultural affairs; and Erica has accepted a PhD position in the psychology department at the University of New Mexico.

In addition to focusing on their own volunteer year, the 2006-2007 community continues to extend their generous hospitality to applicants considering the MercyWorks Program for next year as we complete the selection process.

Upcoming Events

May 29	MHBG Hoops to Homework Championship Game
June 24	Father Scott's 25 th Anniversary Mass
June 25	MHBG Education Banquet – Palmer House Hilton
July 7	AfterCare Annual Picnic – Skinner Park
July 12	BastilleDay 5K Walk/Run – West Loop
July 10-13	MercyWorks End of Year Retreat
July 24	MercyWorks End-of-Year Ceremony
All Spring/Summer	Check out opportunities for retreats, service trips and workshops through Charis Ministries at http://jesuits.net/charis/

Reflections On The Journey

Prayer For Couderc

By: Erica Nason



Erica with two of her Couderc Youth after performing at the Mercy Home Talent Show

I am your mirror –

May I reflect only the beautiful women with unending potential and a reservoir of gifts that blossom before me daily.

I am your echo –

May I resound the thoughts and feelings that are yours uniquely in ways that bring you clarity and hope.

I am your punching bag –

Deliver upon me the frustrations of a world that has been unkind and know that no more harm will come to you.

I am your shield –

May I shoulder the blows you cannot bear alone.

I am your guide –

May I have the wisdom to lead you down the right paths and the humility to know when I myself am lost.

I am your student –

May I never stop learning from your wisdom.

I am your nurse –

May I be vigilant in my care for you until there are no longer wounds to heal.

I am your friend –

May we share laughter and new experiences as well as tears and heartache.

I am your sister –

May I be let into your heart and come to know you well, forming an unbreakable bond.

I am your mother –

May I look upon you only with love.

But most of all –

I am yours.

Spotlight on... MercyWorks Alumni

Erin Svare - MercyWorks 2002-2003

"Volunteering at Mercy Home changed my life. I always knew that I wanted to enroll in a long-term service program after college because I knew that the experience would expand my horizons, as well as enhance any career

path I chose. I did not expect it would be easy, however, and it certainly wasn't! My year at MH was full of challenges and there were days when I wanted to throw in the towel, and days when the girls' personal stories made me cry. But the support from my MercyWorks community and co-workers kept me going. Looking back now, however, I can see that my toughest, lowest moments are also when I experienced the most growth.

My experience at Mercy Home led me to where I am today, serving as the Director of Annual Giving & Stewardship at the West End House Boys & Girls Club in Boston, which provides after-school and evening programs for youth ages 7-18 in a low-income, largely immigrant community. Children and their parents face tremendous challenges as they make the U.S. their new home, and we help ease that transition by providing a safe, nurturing, educational and fun environment for kids. I interact with youth on a daily basis since my office is inside the club, and each encounter motivates me to keep raising the funds required to keep the doors open. The work we do is too important not to."

Danielle Mezzino -MercyWorks 2003-2004

"Where am I now and where have I come from are interesting questions, as each twist and turn takes me in a different direction, but I can honestly say that my directions continue to be guided by my experience at Mercy Home. There is not a week that goes by that I do not think of my time spent with the kids working in the Education Department, challenges in community living, or reflecting on my own journey.

Since returning to the East Coast to be closer to my family, I have graduated from Seton Hall's EPICS program (Educational Partners in Catholic Schools), a two year program where I received my Master's of Education while teaching in a Catholic School. Then, while searching for a teaching job this past summer, the owner of the camp I was working at in Philadelphia approached me and asked, "What is your ideal job?" My response was simple, "What I did in Chicago, at Mercy Home for Boys and Girls". He was offering me my ideal job in the non-profit arm of his company. Though I had planned on teaching for a few more years, I knew this opportunity may not come again. After much reflection, I decided to pick up once again, move to Philadelphia, and act as the Program Director for ESF Dream Camp, a non-profit year round after-school and mentoring program for underprivileged urban students.

While I miss the support of all my housemates, I am still lucky enough to be able to collaborate and work with one of them! Miss Emily and I cannot count the times we have said, "Well, this is how we did it at Mercy...." In sum, I am thankful everyday for my experience at Mercy Home. The boys taught me determination - how to work with and help students whose lives I will never be able to comprehend. My community gave me the strength and confidence to know I can always do more. And Mercy Home showed me how an amazing dream can grow to be a reality and truly give opportunities to people that everyone else has given up on."