

SINCE 1887



MERCY HOME FOR BOYS & GIRLS

A Solution for Kids in Crisis

MercyWorks
A Faith-Based Volunteer Program

www.MercyHome.org
FALL 2008

There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.

M. Scott Peck

Welcome to the Mercy Home family!! On August 7th, the MercyWorks apartment was once again filled with life as 14 new bright-eyed volunteers entered into a year of intentional living and service at Mercy Home for Boys and Girls. Over the past month, Megan, Alison, Catherine, Shiquita, Zoila, Marc, Erin, Jess, Eileen, Ashley, John, Patrick, Katie and Kate have gotten off to a great start by building community and beginning their year of service with the youth and families at Mercy Home.



Members of the 2008-2009 MercyWorks Community sign their covenant during their first community night.

The first few weeks have been jam packed with all kinds of activities. Beginning with questions in a basket on the beach their first night, the MercyWorks Olympics, CPI training and AmeriCorps paperwork, the volunteers have been very busy. They also interviewed for and received their placements and attended a wonderful Orientation retreat in Plymouth, Indiana.

The Orientation gave the volunteers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the MercyWorks values of Spirituality, Social Justice, Professional Development, Community and Simple Living. The retreat was also filled with time to get to know one another as well as lots of national pride as the volunteers gathered at the end of each night to cheer on the Olympians. After being inspired

by a variety of speakers, including alumni and Fr. Scott, the volunteers came together to create their covenant for the year. The following is an excerpt from this year's covenant:

The MercyWorkers of '08-'09, in order to positively impact the lives of youth and become our fullest selves, lovingly challenge one another:

- ...To be open and present to God, each other and ourselves;
- ...To take ownership of our work, our community and personal growth;
- ...And to enact change in the world, in our environment and in ourselves.

Since returning back to Chicago, the volunteers have gotten into the swing of things by working in their placements, planning community nights, sharing in group prayer, having community basketball games and belly dancing clinics. We are excited to watch this group grow together and challenge and support one another throughout the year!!

Upcoming Dates:

September 21	Fall Quarterly Liturgy and Brunch
September 25	Voices and Vision Speaker Series at St. Xavier University featuring Elie Wiesel
October 16-18	CNVS National Conference (Portland)
October 24-27	MercyWorks Fall Retreat
November 8	Ringside for Mercy's Sake
November 20	Faith & Work Speaker Series Event at MHBG
November 27	Thanksgiving at MercyWorks
January 2009	MW Alumni Retreat Weekend
All Fall	Check out opportunities for retreats and workshops through Charis Ministries at http://www.charisministries.org/

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Reflections on the Journey

MercyWorks alum Karen Sarmir '07-'08 reflected on her experience with the newest group of MercyWorks at the opening ceremonies. This is an excerpt:



Run. A whole year awaits you. There are many challenges and opportunities that await you, so run with the challenges, embrace the opportunities, and know that your community is right beside you to support you the whole way.

I remember my 1st week at Mercy Home, the introductions and being overwhelmed by all of the people I was meeting. The initial anxiety and awkwardness soon disappeared, and my 13 community members quickly became the people I looked forward to seeing every night, whether it was to vent frustrations or rejoice in an accomplishment after a long day at work. Living in community will be one of the biggest rewards and also one of the biggest challenges of this year. Cherish every moment you have with your community members, whether it's time spent together during a community night or just "boppin" after work around the kitchen counter, snacking at 11:00 pm.

This year will be one where you are constantly challenged to go outside your comfort zone. A personal challenge occurred for me during our spring retreat, when we participated in a high ropes course. I'm terrified of heights and this was the last thing I wanted to be doing on retreat. When we got to the high ropes course, I looked at one of the challenges, which was a log suspended 30 feet high in the air between two trees. We were supposed to climb one tree and walk across the log to the other tree. Seeing this, I started shaking. When it was finally my turn, I began climbing the tree and started crying. I cried the entire way up the tree, telling myself that I didn't want to do this. As I got higher and higher, I began hearing voices below yelling words of encouragement over my sobs. I actually made it to the top of the tree and I remember being told not to look down, which of course was the first thing I did.

As I stood on the log, literally hugging the tree I had just climbed, I heard voices in the peace and quiet of being up so high. All of my roommates, standing below me, yelling words of support or funny jokes which actually made me laugh through my tears. If I had not had my community to support me, I know I never would have walked across that log and back with such determination and I probably wouldn't have even climbed up the tree to begin with. They had faith in me. They pushed me. They supported me. They rejoiced with me in my accomplishment when I was back on solid ground, and it was truly amazing. And now, in just 4 days, I'll be heading to Colorado to go camping with the youth in Cooke Home, climbing up mountains, thousands of feet high. The impact my community had on me in that moment will last forever. Your community will be your rock and your strength through this year.

Whether you see it during the year or not, you will make a difference in the lives of the youth at Mercy Home. I wish

you challenges, growth, friendships, laughs, accomplishments, and whatever else this year brings. Enjoy and embrace every minute.

Alumni Update

There have been MercyWorks reunions all over the country this summer. Weddings tend to bring old friends together and this summer has proved to do just that. Grant Gholson and Erica Walter gave the '02-'03 MercyWorks group something to celebrate when they met at the altar on July 19th.

Julie O'Connor '05-'06 and Eric Wright were also married this summer. Their wedding on July 19th was attended by each of her 13 roommates and was the first time the entire community was together since their closing ceremony two years earlier. Julie's housemates came from as far as California and the Marshall Islands to help her celebrate her special day.

Amy Lutz '05-'06 and Andrew Schumacher were married on April 12th in Maryland. She was joined by 11 of her roommates in celebrating marital bliss.

Emily Felton '06-'07 tied the knot with Sam Pearson on August 16th in Rochester, Minnesota. She was joined by 11 of her community members as she celebrated her nuptials.



The 2006-2007 Community celebrates with Emily Felton at her wedding in Minnesota

Be a Recruitment HERO!



Are you looking for a way to help with MercyWorks recruitment this year? As much as we would love to travel the country to visit EVERY school, our time and resources are limited. If you live near a college or university that you think we should tap into, and if you would be willing to attend a recruitment fair, visit a classroom to talk about your MercyWorks experience or meet with students individually, please send an e-mail to Ian McBride at ianmcb@mercyhome.org. Please include the name of the school(s) you would be willing to visit in your area and the types of recruitment activities that interest you. Thank you!!!