

SINCE 1887



MERCY HOME FOR BOYS & GIRLS

A Solution for Kids in Crisis

MercyWorks
A Faith-Based Volunteer Program

www.MercyHome.org
Summer 2009

It's easy to make a buck. It's a lot tougher to make a difference.

-- Tom Brokaw

The 2008-2009 MercyWorks year has continued to roll along through the spring, filled with wonderful retreat sessions, a Hoops to Homework championship game, Mercy Home events and each of the volunteers trying to answer that often asked question, "What are you doing next year?"

Shamrocks for Kids once again provided an opportunity for all the volunteers to be Irish, at least for a day. Marc, Zolia, Megan, Kate, and Erin volunteered at the party this year, helping to sell raffle tickets, manage crowds and even dressing up as characters like Shrek and Barney to entertain the children. Hoops to Homework is always a highlight of the MercyWorks year. While a number of volunteers participated this year, Kate was a part of the Michigan State team, which took home this year's championship.



Kate helps to lead Michigan State to victory in this year's Hoops to Homework Championship game while MercyWorks Alumni Karen S. defends. Karen, a seasoned veteran, played in her second consecutive championship game.

The spring retreat once again took place the final week of April in Lake Geneva. The volunteers did an absolutely wonderful job with leading sessions throughout the week. The group experienced sessions dealing with worship, the concept of grace, the spirituality of relationships, fly fishing, discernment and God's plan for each of us, and the Ignatian exercises. Fr. Gary joined us to celebrate mass unexpectedly to prepare the volunteers a delicious breakfast. The weather was beautiful, the company was delightful and the experience will not soon be forgotten.

Community nights remain an essential part of each week for the volunteers. The momentum gained from the spirituality retreat helped to strengthen the volunteer's commitment to these evenings too. Some of the recent community nights have included: an evening of volunteering at the Chicago Food Depository; watching a video about child soldiers in Uganda and writing letters to Illinois senators alerting them of human right violations occurring there; and playing a MercyWorks jeopardy game, sharing memories of the volunteers from the past year.

As the end of the MercyWorks year begins to become a reality for the current volunteers, many of them are beginning to make plans for next year. Between five and eight volunteers will be staying on full time Mercy Home while others return to school for graduate studies. Shiquita has been accepted at Tulane to study nutrition. Eileen will be matriculating to Boston College to study social work. Patrick will be studying medicine at the University of Nebraska; and Catherine has been accepted into a dual degree program at both Loyola University of Chicago and the Erickson Institute to study social work and early childhood development.

Upcoming Events

June 17	MHBG Education Banquet – St. Ignatius High School
June 26	Mercy Day
July 7-10	MercyWorks End of Year Retreat
July 9	Bastille Day Race
July 10-11	World's Largest Block Party – Old St. Pat's Church
July 21	MercyWorks End of Year Ceremony
August 1	AfterCare Annual Picnic – Skinner Park
August 6	Move in Day for 2009-2010 Volunteers
August 8	Opening Ceremony for New Volunteers
August 10-14	MercyWorks Orientation Retreat
August 17	Volunteers begin work



Reflections on the Journey

Patrick Reppert reflects on the similarities between himself and one of his youth on their journeys to Mercy Home.



Spring is slowly giving way to summer. The weather is getting warmer, the days are becoming longer. Eager beach goers are returning to the long abandoned shores of Lake Michigan. Bars and restaurants with patio seating suddenly have a new redeeming quality; and the city streets are becoming more crowded with people awakening from their winter hibernation. Of course, summer also means the completion of a school year. For the youth of Mercy Home, this change from spring to summer means fulfilled summer schedules, activities, and summer staff; no more tutors, and, for many, transitioning to new programs or even back home. This is particularly true in Noha Home, where I have been working this year.

Recently, I sat with one of my advocatees and his mother as they met with the AfterCare team to discuss discharge and the services available to them through AfterCare. This youth's mother explained that she placed her son at Mercy Home due to a lack of supervision at home in a bad neighborhood. She explained that it was by chance that she found Mercy Home: she works a few blocks from Mercy Home's boys' campus and stopped in one day while driving home from work. When offered continued family therapy through AfterCare, she became very excited. She explained that, though she didn't expect much therapy or advice on parenting when her son moved into Mercy Home, she feels it has been the most beneficial thing for her and her son. She has instilled more structure at home and, as a result, has a healthier relationship with her son. She now feels safe, comfortable, and is excited about bringing him home to live with her. It was an interesting perspective I was not expecting.

Like the youth of Mercy Home, summer is also a time of transition for the other MercyWorkers and me. It is frightening, as it is for many youth, to consider either being at a new location in Mercy Home next year or being at a new place doing something completely different. And, like the youth and their families, we have all learned and grown from this year in many ways we had never anticipated.

I found my advocatee's story especially relevant because I too stumbled upon Mercy Home. On a trip home from college last year I stopped to visit a friend in Chicago. As fate would have it, he lived next door to Ian McBride. I met Ian and agreed to visit Mercy Home when I divulged to him that I had no plans for the upcoming year. Upon acceptance to the program, I had many expectations for the year. Some were easily met: a group of lifelong friends, exposure to new cultures, and adventures in a new city. Since

then, I have found that I have learned and grown the most from experiences and opportunities I did not anticipate or expect. I learned that regardless of the time I have, I will never be able to maintain a clean room. A pat on the back and a silent car ride with a youth who is having a bad day can be more important than a conversation; basketball courts are the best classrooms; humor is the best way to diffuse any situation and is also a great tool in serious conversations; that simple living is not just giving things up but living more intentionally; that morning check-ins aren't that productive; that social justice doesn't involve academic integrity; that being upfront and honest is important in any relationship; and that living with thirteen people is really challenging but so worth it.

As summer continues, old Mercy Workers will begin their transition out of the apartment and new Mercy Workers will begin their transition in. With these transitions will come expectations for the new year. I'm excited, though, to see what unexpected opportunities and lessons will come my way next year.

A Summer Prayer

Long warm days...

The pace of life slows...

A time for picnics and rest in the shade...

Lord,

help me to rest awhile in the cooling shade of your presence.

Slow down my restless heart and fill me with gentle compassion for all your people.

Amen.

We Want to Share in Your Good News

If you have big news in your life we want to celebrate with you. Please help us share in your good news by emailing Ian McBride at ianmcb@mercyhome.org so that you may celebrate with the rest of the MercyWorks family.

What's New at Mercy Home

Catch up on all that is happening around Mercy Home these days, including additions to the Boys' Campus, with a new cafeteria and a new learning center. Watch some of the great new videos about youth stories or learn more details about the mayor's state of the city address occurring this July at Mercy Home. Learn more about all these things at www.mercyhome.org