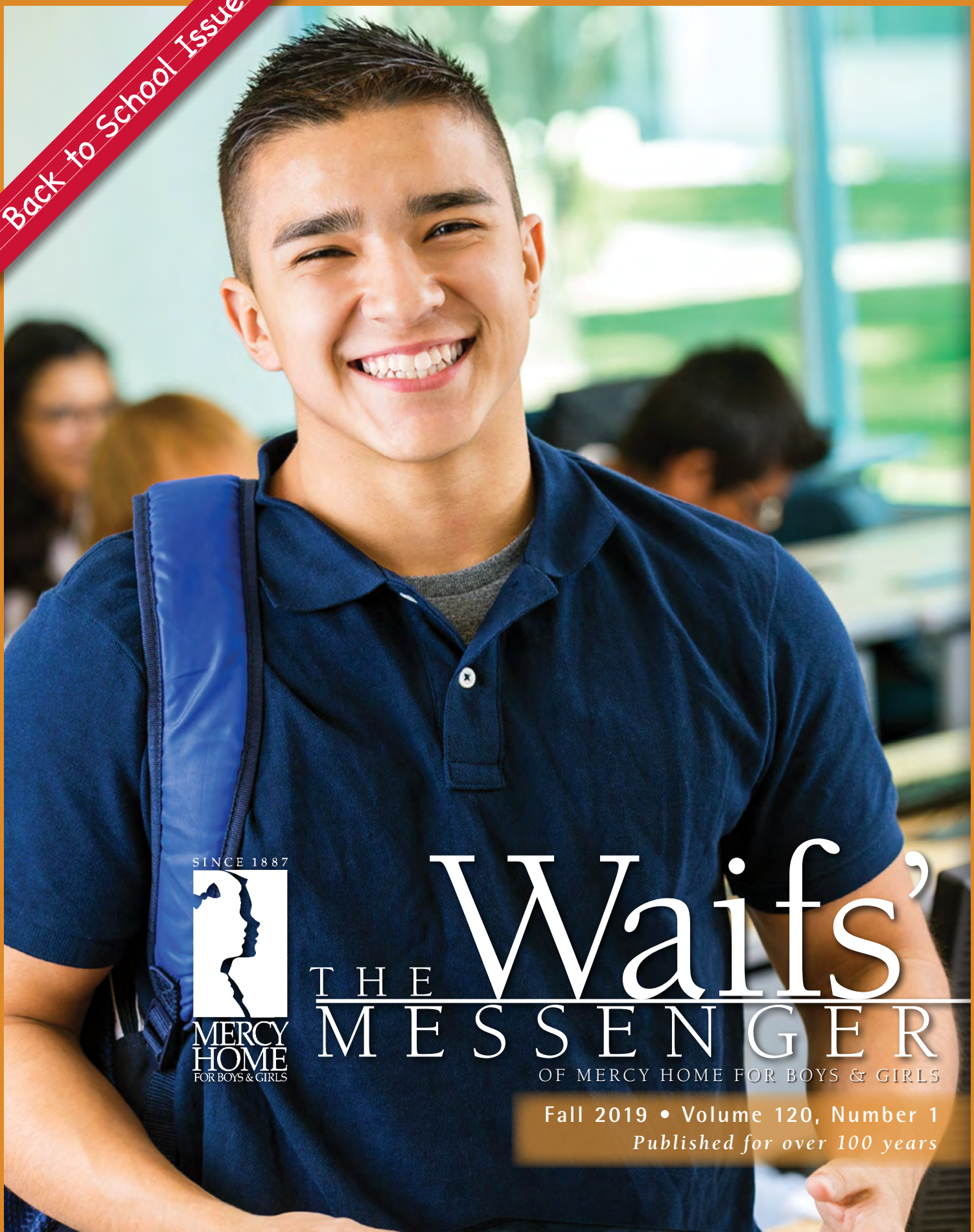


Back to School Issue



Waifs'

THE MESSENGER

OF MERCY HOME FOR BOYS & GIRLS

Fall 2019 • Volume 120, Number 1

Published for over 100 years

Tasting the Harvest • A Future in Hospitality • Stability Makes the Difference
Graduates Reflect on College • Alum Shares Advice • Art Showcase

Kids Enjoy Fruits of Their Labor

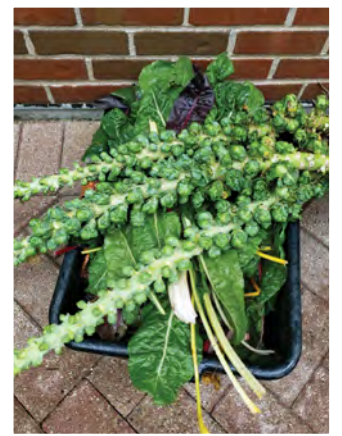
Mercy Home kids and coworkers enjoyed a garden-harvest dinner in August featuring a menu full of vegetables grown by our young people.

The menu featured fresh tomato salsa, garden fresh pizza sauce, kale and walnut pesto, chard with brussels sprouts, smoked chicken banana pepper soup, vegetarian quesadillas, and zucchini and shrimp noodles.

In the spring, kids from each home were assigned vegetable plots to grow tomatoes, peppers, kale, Swiss chard, zucchini, and cucumbers. Throughout the season, kids helped plant and tend the gardens, then harvested the vegetables at the end of summer.

Mercy Home coworkers worked side by side with our kids, who explored their green thumbs and learned about where their food comes from. Kids researched and voted on recipes, then sent them to the kitchen team, who executed the dishes.

"Kids at Mercy Home are like the seeds we plant," said Human Resources Coordinator Rosalinda Masson, who spearheaded the garden team. "When the kids first arrive, they're blowing around and don't know what's going to happen. Then suddenly they find themselves in the perfect mix of nutrients and care. I see them grow and blossom, as they grow up to become wonderful humans."



Father Scott's Reflection

From Darkness to Promise

If there is one phrase that I hear our kids repeat the most, it's this: *Before I came to Mercy Home, I never saw myself as...*

...an honor-roll student.

...a graduate.

...successful.

Before they walked through Mercy Home's doors, our kids saw themselves in a negative light. They saw themselves as failing students, likely to drop out of school or be stuck in dead-end jobs. Some saw themselves being lured by the streets—in gangs, in jail, or worse.

It's hard to envision a bright future when everything around you is so dim. Our kids saw their single parent struggling to provide for the family or struggling with substance use. They saw the electricity getting shut off due to unpaid bills. They saw empty cupboards staring back at their empty stomachs.

Outside of their homes, it was even dimmer. In their neighborhoods, our kids saw blight, broken windows, and broken dreams. They saw yellow crime-scene tape and boarded storefronts. They saw gangs and drug dealers on the corner.

But once these kids step through Mercy Home's old oak door, a new reality comes into focus, thanks to good friends like you. They see food on the table. They see a warm bed in a safe environment. They see a support network full of

positive role models who help build their confidence so they can overcome life's challenges.

Suddenly, life doesn't appear so dim. New colors, new textures, and new possibilities are revealed. Our young people begin to see themselves in a new light—one that is vibrant and full of hope.

By taking advantage of Mercy Home's resources—academic tutors, career enrichment programs, and extracurricular activities—our boys and girls no longer see themselves as lost causes. Instead, they see themselves as vessels of promise, thanks to people like you.

Then, one day, they look up, only to find themselves doing the impossible: making the honor roll, walking across a stage to accept their high school diploma, applying to college, earning a master's degree, or boarding a plane to take an overseas trip of a lifetime.

Your support does many things, but the most important thing it does is show our boys and girls that conquering the obstacles in their lives is not as far-fetched as it seems. As you read this issue of *The Waifs' Messenger*, I hope you see the clarity and vision you have given our kids. Thanks to your dedication, they see wide-open horizons and futures endless with possibility. ✚

FR. Scott



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For an insider's look around our Mercy Home, please visit mercyhome.org.



Education and Work Goals Now Within Reach

Life was stressful for Nadine. She was working two jobs to help her parents, who had health problems.

Her father did his best to support his wife and four children, but it was hard to make ends meet, even with Nadine pitching in.

When she graduated high school, Nadine wondered what would come next. She dreamed of going to college, but financial struggles made it seem impossible. Nadine cried every day. She felt like a failure.

“It was really depressing because I always wanted to get an education and get a degree,” she said.

To add to her problems, her brother had fallen in with a bad crowd. They hung out at the house when her parents weren’t home. They treated Nadine poorly. She skipped meals just so she wouldn’t have to go downstairs and deal with them.

Nadine knew a young man living at Mercy Home. He told her about the Home and suggested she consider moving in.

She was hesitant at first but decided to reach out to our admissions team, who recommended she live with her sister until she could come to Mercy Home. Living with her sister was better, but she still had to work to help support her sister’s family. And her brother and his friends followed her to her sister’s house.

“It wasn’t even safe to go outside, and that’s what would cause me anxiety,” she said. “I wouldn’t leave the house unless it was for work.”

When Nadine moved into Mercy Home, she was apprehensive. Having been abused and neglected by babysitters throughout her life, she didn’t trust our coworkers at first. She was shy and scared.

But eventually, things changed.

In Her Own Words...

Nadine shares part of a speech she recently gave at Mercy Home:

“I couldn’t afford college, and neither could my parents. And that was when I really knew what depression meant to me. It was either support my family or go to school. I love my family, so I stayed to support them. But not going to school put me in a depression because I knew I was going to be in my situation for such a long time. And that’s not a situation I wanted to be in.

Within my first months at Mercy Home, I learned how to budget, take public transportation, communicate with others and how to become

independent. I was assigned a therapist who helped me cope with my anxiety and depression.

Mercy Home helped enroll me in college. I’ve always dreamed of working in a hotel and I managed to get a job in a luxury hotel in downtown Chicago.

I have a passion for meeting new people and helping make their lives better because Mercy Home made my life better. I’m now finishing up my associate degree and working toward my dream career. I’m now in a community that cares, supports, and motivates one another. And that will be there for me for the rest of my life.”



Mercy Home's resources and loving coworkers helped Nadine overcome depression and pursue her dream of going to college.

"I noticed that this place is not a scary place at all; it's the complete opposite," she said. "Mercy Home made me feel very comfortable and they welcomed me with open arms. It was amazing to have all this support and it was really eye-opening for me because people here want to help."

Nadine got to work right away building her future. She enrolled in school and is working toward her associate degree in hospitality. With our Home's help, she landed a job at a luxury hotel in downtown Chicago where she is gaining experience toward her future career. She plans on getting a bachelor's degree and hopes to rise up through the ranks at the hotel.

Nadine has learned a lot since coming to Mercy Home, like how to cope with anxiety, how to budget, and how to take risks and communicate better with others. And she knows she is in a safe place.

"I'm very grateful to have all the support. Without Mercy Home, I wouldn't be where I am today or even be who I am today," she said. "Mercy Home changed my life for the better."

Thank you for inspiring our boys and girls to achieve their goals. Your loyalty gives young people like Nadine the confidence and support they need to make their lives extraordinary. ✚

Become a Monthly Giving Guardian Angel Today!

Every day, Guardian Angels make a very real, direct impact on the lives of our kids at Mercy Home. Through a committed giving schedule, these dedicated friends pledge to support the programs that help our children turn their lives around.

There's no obligation to join the ranks of our Guardian Angels, and any monthly gift amount—large or small—will be most gratefully welcomed by our kids. Just knowing that you have committed your support and prayers to our mission will be a wonderful blessing.

Please consider becoming a Guardian Angel to our children.

Father Scott, I would like to be a Guardian Angel and support your children!

I will do my best to share a monthly gift of:

\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please mail your gift to:
Mercy Home for Boys & Girls
1140 West Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60607

Call
877-Mercy55
(877-637-2955)
to join
today!



Mercy Home Culture Brings Clarity

Carlos needed a way out. He was so desperate that he took matters into his own hands.

“A lot of young people have Mercy Home recommended to them,” he said. “For me, I looked for and found it myself.”

Carlos lived with his parents in a dangerous neighborhood, where they were afraid to go out after dark. But things weren’t much better inside the home.

As the breadwinner, Carlos’s father provided for the family, but struggled with alcohol abuse. He went to jail for a DUI during Carlos’s sophomore year of high school, adding further strain to an already rocky father-son relationship.

Carlos’s mother worked at a factory, but her minimum wage was barely enough to scrape by. As financial burdens and stress intensified, Carlos and his mother became more irritable and fought more often.

Making matters worse, his downstairs neighbors added to the chaos. “They were fighting, arguing, and throwing stuff,” Carlos remembered. “Every day, we heard yelling, fighting, and crying. It was hard.”

Carlos’s grades took a nosedive his junior year. He was depressed and had dark thoughts. So when he learned about Mercy Home, he didn’t hesitate to act.

“I was so tense and anxious, I just wanted out of my home,” Carlos said.



Mercy Home’s stable environment helped Carlos become more organized and improve his time management skills, while exposing him to new opportunities and cultures.

“I immediately called Mercy Home.” He moved in shortly thereafter.

Carlos had a positive first impression of Mercy Home. He liked the campus and thought everyone was super nice. Even so, it took some adjustment.

“When I moved in, I had a roommate—something that I never really had before,” he said. “I had to think about how my actions affected him. If I left my dirty clothes out, I bet he’s not going to like that.”



“I was so tense and anxious, I just wanted out of my home.”

— Carlos

Even with new concerns, he quickly embraced the opportunity to live with other young men his age.

“Growing up as an only child, then living with seven other people my age—I like it a lot because it’s what I imagine having siblings would be like,” he said.

At Mercy Home, Carlos improved his organizational skills and time management. He said the guidance from our coworkers comes from a good place.

“They keep my interests in mind when they expect me to do something, even if it drives me insane,” Carlos said. “It’s helped me grow a lot.”

Mercy Home also inspired him to continue his education. After graduating high school in the spring, Carlos began summer classes at a nearby community college. He plans on completing his general education requirements before transferring to a four-year college.

“I feel like if I hadn’t come to Mercy Home, I wouldn’t have been motivated to complete college,” he said. “It’s hard to express how grateful I am.”

Carlos is still mulling over his career options, but he is considering a career as a mathematician, engineer, or physicist. He also has an interest in journalism.

Mercy Home helped him prepare for his future career through job labs, where he learned such skills as how to put together a resume, write a cover letter, and dress professionally for work.

When asked about the best part of Mercy Home, Carlos thought long and hard before answering.

“Exposure,” he said. “Exposure to different things, exposure to opportunities. That’s helped me and a lot of other people here as well.”

Carlos feels fortunate to have learned new things and been exposed to cultures that are different from his own. He’s also gained a better appreciation for basketball, a favorite activity of many of our young men.

But his biggest stride is that he finally feels like he’s out of the fog he experienced before coming to Mercy Home. Now, everything is clear.

“It’s because there has been a positive increase in how I feel about myself,” he said. “Things feel more stable now by being here.”

We are so thankful for loving friends like you, who make such huge difference in the lives of young people like Carlos. By providing our kids the stable home they need, you not only give them the resources for success, you give them a place to find clarity and peace. ✚

Double your
education gift
this summer:
Give by 8/31!

A good friend of Mercy Home gave us a challenge: If we can raise \$100,000 for our kids by August 31, he will match it with another \$100,000! You have the opportunity to make an enormous

difference to every child at Mercy Home. Your gift could be doubled to help give our boys and girls a good education. We hope to hear from you by August 31 about this special challenge.



To make your gift go twice as far for our kids, please visit mercyhome.org/summergift



Planting a Tree for the Next Generation

As we welcome autumn and enjoy the bounty of nature's harvest, I'm reminded of one of my favorite founding fathers of America. I'm not talking about Washington, Jefferson, or Franklin, but another figure who famously produced a bumper crop across this new nation: Johnny Appleseed.

Unlike Paul Bunyan or the Lone Ranger, "Johnny Appleseed" was a real person. Born John Chapman in Massachusetts just before the Revolutionary War, he is best remembered for introducing apples to much of the Northeastern U.S. and Canada.

Johnny made his way on foot—often barefoot—across a large swath of land, from Pennsylvania to Illinois, planting apple trees along his way. He was a Christian

missionary for the New Church, whose beliefs were rooted in faith, love, and charity.

For 50 years, Johnny lived as a vagabond, moving from town to town, sleeping under the stars, and living an incredibly simple life. Everywhere he went, he planted trees and preached the word of God.

But why did Johnny Appleseed do all of this? Why would he plant so many trees that he would never see grow? Because he knew that he was doing something larger than himself. He believed that he was planting "Heaven on Earth" for those who came after him. Even if he would never be able to lie in the shade of one of his trees, or taste the fruit at harvest time, Johnny knew that he was making the world a better place, one seed at a time.

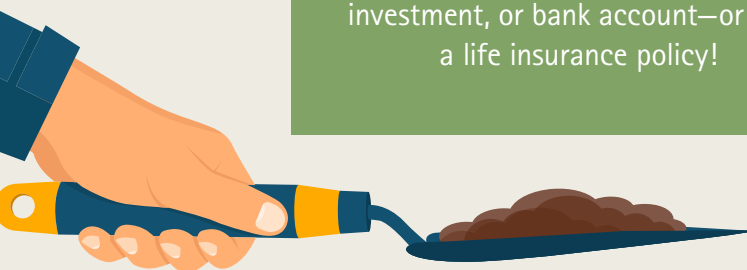
I love this story because it reminds me of all the faithful donors to Mercy Home who I've met over the years. People like you, who ask, "How can I leave the world better than I found it?" and "How would I like to be remembered?"

Over the years, countless lives have been changed



Plant a Seed for the Next Generation by Including Mercy Home in Your Estate Plan

In addition to a will or trust, you can also make a lasting gift to our children by naming Mercy Home as a beneficiary of a retirement account, investment, or bank account—or even a life insurance policy!



by people across the country who have planted seeds for the next generation by including Mercy Home in their will or trust.

In fact, you may have already included Mercy Home in your estate plan, or you might be considering this now. If so, thank you for your commitment to the future. We truly could not do this work without your support.

Every day, I talk with donors just like you about leaving a lasting legacy for the next generation by supporting the kids at Mercy Home. This is often the easiest way to make a substantial gift. It doesn't cost a penny from you today, but years from now it could impact the life of a child in ways that you and I could never predict.

Legacy gifts are tailored to your wishes. You can designate a specific gift or dollar amount, a percentage of what you have, or even share the remainder of your estate after you provide for your loved ones. If you've already prepared your will and would like to add Mercy Home as a beneficiary, you can do so with a simple codicil (an amendment to your will, where you can lay out your final wishes). And if your circumstances should change at any time, you are always free to change your mind.

I hope you will consider investing in the future with a legacy gift to Mercy Home. If you have any questions about how to secure your legacy, please feel free to give me a call at 1-800-378-8266, or email plannedgift@mercyhome.org. ✚



Phil Zielinski is the Director of Philanthropy at Mercy Home for Boys & Girls. He is passionate about helping you and your family maximize your impact on the charities closest to your heart. If you have a question about will preparation, establishing a gift annuity or charitable remainder trust, or any other type of planned gift, please call Phil at 1-800-378-8266, or visit our website at MercyHome.giftlegacy.com to learn more.

To learn more about how gift planning can benefit you and the children of Mercy Home, please return this coupon in the postage paid envelope provided.

☐ I'm considering a gift in my will or estate plans to benefit the children of Mercy Home. Please have a Philanthropic Advisor contact me.

☐ I would like to know more about how I can make a planned gift to benefit Mercy Home's children. Please have a Philanthropic Advisor contact me.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Daytime Phone _____

E-mail _____

Mercy Home for Boys & Girls • **Attention: Phil Zielinski** • 1140 W. Jackson Blvd. • Chicago, IL 60607
MercyHome.giftlegacy.com

While we are commonly known as Mercy Home for Boys & Girls, our legal name is "Mission of Our Lady of Mercy, Inc." (Tax ID Number: 36-2171726).

WHAT COLLEGE MEANS TO THEM...

“Going to DePaul is the next chapter in my life. My parents are very happy and very proud of me. Honestly, I never thought I’d make it this far because I didn’t have the resources to go to college. But Mercy Home was able to provide those resources and help me get assistance. Mercy Home made it all possible. It really feels like a dream.”

—*Clemente*, associate degree from Malcolm X College; transferring to DePaul University



“I feel very blessed to be going to college because I never thought I’d go. Not very many people in my family have gone to college. I’m excited to have a brand new start and pursue my academic goals and dream career as an art therapist. I’m also excited to make myself and my family proud.”

—*Sierra*, high school diploma; going to Arrupe College of Loyola University Chicago



“My mother was tearful when I graduated high school. But college? That’s winning the lottery! But winning the lottery involves luck. I’ve been lucky many times in my life, but I also think we create our own luck by staying positive and controlling what we can—our actions, our character, and who we become. Mercy Home opens doors for you that you don’t even know exist.”

—*Marcelo*, bachelor’s degree from DePaul University



“In the next chapter of my life, I have been accepted to Malcolm X College, where I plan to major in nursing. I look forward to accomplishing my next set of goals.”

—*Justise*, high school diploma; attending Malcolm X College





“Graduating and going to college means everything to me! It means stepping out of the past and into the future, going from one place to another, and charting my path.”

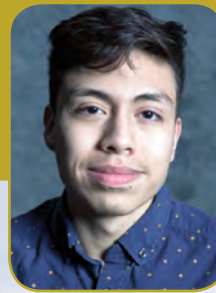
—*Johnathain*, high school diploma; going to Moody Bible Institute

“Finishing graduate school means everything to me. If you would’ve asked me 10 years ago what I’d be doing with my future, I would’ve never imagined I’d be getting my master’s degree. I’ve never seen my mom so proud of me as I’ve seen her lately. Getting my master’s isn’t just for me. I feel like I’m doing it for my mom, for my little brother, and in honor of my late brother.”



—*Zeni*, master’s degree from University of Chicago

“I plan to get my associate degree, then hopefully transfer to the University of Illinois at Chicago to get my bachelor’s degree in finance and business. In the past five years, I’ve become more responsible, looked at the big picture, and realized how education can propel you forward in life.”



—*Juan*, high school diploma; going to Harold Washington College



“College is a journey of self-actualization and self-acceptance through the acquisition of knowledge and experience. It allows me, and other youths, to engage in constructive problem-solving that traverses socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial disparities to unify and strengthen one another. This ethical and theoretical approach to life is what gives birth to the creation of new medicines, political policies, humanitarian efforts, and everything in between.”

—*Tyrone*, transferring to Loyola University Chicago



Alum Shares Advice with Graduates

Like any parent, we want our young people to go far in life. But no matter where they may roam, they know they can always count on the love and support of a family back at Mercy Home for Boys & Girls.

Because of the stable home that your generosity makes possible, our children can feel confident about marching boldly in the direction of their dreams.

That's just what Reggie did after earning his diploma from

Chicago's St. Ignatius College Prep in 2008. Back then, he shared his story at an annual luncheon that celebrates our young people upon graduating from elementary school, high school, college, and vocational programs. Last spring, Reggie came back home to update a new generation of Mercy Home graduates about his journey and gave them some advice to take with them as they forge their own paths.

After high school, Reggie earned a bachelor's degree from Emory University in Atlanta. He went on to build a promising career in human resources, earning multiple promotions. And now he's working on a master's degree.

But it has been his love of exploration that has taken him to visit 38 countries on six continents.

"Education opened so many doors," Reggie told our graduates last spring. "And Mercy Home gave me the courage to walk through them."

Today, Reggie has a passion for travel, but what he needed desperately as a teenager was the chance to stop moving. He needed a stable living environment that would



Mercy Home gave Reggie the courage to walk through the doors of opportunity, stamping his ticket to a life of success, travel, and adventure.

enable and encourage him to reach his potential—a true home that would always welcome him back with open arms.

Growing up, Reggie's parents struggled with substance abuse and family separation. Reggie bounced back and forth between Missouri and Chicago. When he was 12, his

mother wound up in prison and his father disappeared from the picture. When they separated, he harbored anger toward his dad.

He later lived with his mother in St. Louis, but her poor health and extreme poverty made it impossible to put down roots or get the education he knew he needed to build a future.

“That year spent in St. Louis was the worst year of my life,” he said. His family slept in hotels, cars, with family friends, and in shelters.

Meanwhile, Reggie had to endure watching his mother suffer abuse at the hands of various boyfriends.

“It made me feel weak that I couldn’t protect my mother,” he said. “That’s always what I wanted to do was to protect my mother. And to see her be hit by a man and to go through her struggles, it really hurt me.”

Reggie’s aunt was a social worker in Chicago and suggested that he look into Mercy Home. He didn’t like the idea of being away from his mother and moving yet again.

But this move would end up changing Reggie’s life for good.

At Mercy Home, Reggie learned how to deal with the pain and anger caused by his turbulent childhood. A shy young man, Reggie gained greater confidence in his relationships and interactions with peers and others. He received tutoring and extra help to catch up in school after being absent so often over the years.

Ultimately, his determination and intelligence earned him a spot at one of Chicago’s best high schools, St. Ignatius. It was there that his desire to see the world was born—when his language class had the opportunity to visit Spain.

Reggie also took advantage of the professional opportunities that Mercy Home offered, including internships at leading companies. Those experiences gave Reggie the skills and inspiration to set career goals and envision success.

“Mercy Home made me who I am today,” he said, adding how grateful he remains for the opportunities he received, thanks to your friendship.

Reggie has a lot of places left to go in his future. But thanks to generous donors like you, he will always have a place to call home. ✚

As he addressed our graduates last spring, Reggie left them with three words of advice:

Forgiveness.

Having reconnected with his father, Reggie urged the graduates not to let their past pain hamper their future growth.

Openness.

He told them there was so much to see and so many opportunities in the world to take advantage of.

Resilience.

Reggie said he had never experienced a darker time than after his mother passed away. But he told the graduates that if they remembered the support systems they had—like their extended family at Mercy Home—they could get through any darkness and emerge stronger.

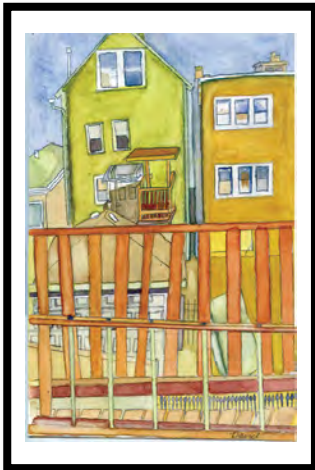
Celebrating Our Kids' Creativity

STAND, Mercy Home's literary and art magazine, gives our boys and girls a chance to express their artistic sides. Featuring poetry, prose, and visual art, STAND is created entirely by our young men and women. This printed showcase celebrates the individual voice and the creative power within us all.

This year's edition of STAND featured a vibrant collection of visual art across a range of mixed media. From fired-ink splatches and watercolors to braided yarn and abstract self-portraits, the spirit of imagination is on full display at Mercy Home.



Johnathain



David



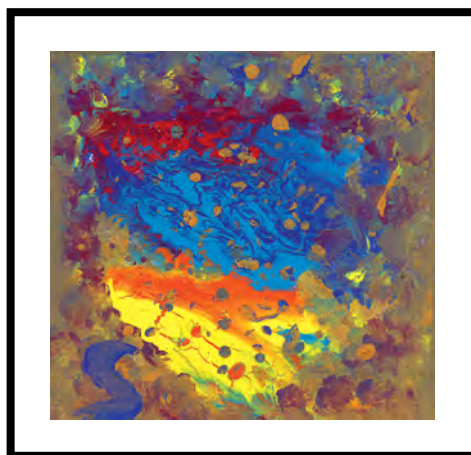
*Asia, Julianna, Lyonna, Indya,
Vanessa, DeJanae*



Jamila



Juan



Wayland



Morpheus

Our Friends Remembered

We wish to acknowledge special friends and benefactors who have remembered Mercy Home for Boys & Girls in their estate plans and have gone to their eternal rest. Please remember them in your prayers.

† Eleanor Badalich, Northlake, IL	† Anna P. Farmer, Philadelphia, PA	† Velma L. Kuhn, Manhattan, KS	† Patricia Painter, Elmhurst, IL
† Constance Barbantini, Chicago, IL	† Lucille B. Gilcreast, Westford, MA	† Magdeleine La Ferte, Bellingham, WA	† Roger Post, Port Charlotte, FL
† Lucille R. Bartels, Orland Park, IL	† Elaine Goebel, Eau Claire, WI	† Bernadette T. Ludtke, Chicago, IL	† Mary L. Quirk, Hales Corners, WI
† LeRoy J. Bast, Fox Lake, IL	† Adrienne Haapala, Diamond Bar, CA	† John "Joe" Lynch, Timonium, MD	† Vincent and Grace Sommella, Norwalk, CT
† Arnoldine A. Bloemberg, Laguna Woods, CA	† Caroline Heart, Arlington Heights, IL	† Edward F. Malover, Bridgeview, IL	† Charlotte Stemke, Joliet, IL
† Carolyn J. Carroll, Bradley, IL	† Florence E. Heckman, Arlington, VA	† Lorraine D. McFerron, Palos Park, IL	† Dan J. Stocker, Belleville, IL
† Rita Matilda Carrone, Metairie, LA	† Patricia H. Houghton, Daytona Beach, FL	† Mary A. McLaughlin, Wheaton, IL	† Cherie A. Van Offelen, Beverly, IL
† Kathleen L. Crawford, Palm Beach Gardens, FL	† Mary M. Hutinet, Monterey Park, CA	† Anneliese Moreland, Leavenworth, KS	† Trude Voss, Scottsdale, AZ
† James Deignan, Chicago, IL	† Evelyn Illich, La Grange Park, IL	† Arlene Norman, Street, MD	† William E. White, Liverpool, NY

If you wish to include Mercy Home for Boys & Girls in your estate plans, our legal name is:
The Mission of Our Lady of Mercy, Inc.

BEANO revisited

by Margaret Ahern



First published in the
February 1967 edition
of *The Waifs' Messenger*

Live Better. Do More.



Have you ever been torn between wanting to do more for Mercy's kids and the need to maintain your standard of living?

With an annuity from Mercy Home you can do both! Gifts made to Mercy Home's Gift Annuity Program go toward helping our kids get a new lease on life while also providing you a stream of income for the rest of yours. So go ahead—show our kids some love today and live a little better knowing you can count on Mercy for lifetime income.

**INCREASED
RATES
FOR 2019!**

Age	Rate
90+	10.7%
85	9.0%
80	7.9%
75	7.1%
70	6.1%
65	5.6%
60	5.2%

**For more information,
call us toll-free at 1-800-378-8266**

Rates effective through December 31, 2019