

Hope House Journal

Summer 2018

Concerns Grow As White House Moves On Vital Human Concerns

While investigations continue into Russian meddling in U.S. politics and how or whether President Trump is tied to it, very important decisions affecting all of us, but especially poor and marginalized people, are being considered and made in Washington DC.

An affordable housing crisis continues to grow across the country. Rising rents and land speculation are pushing low income people from their homes and neighborhoods. Meanwhile, HUD Secretary Carson wants to increase rents for public housing residents, project-based and voucher-based Section 8 renters.

The Trump administration has targeted the Affordable Care Act from the beginning. Unable to get Congress to overturn it, the White House is doing what it can to cripple it. While not perfect, the ACA has had a very positive effect on the lives of millions.

The federal minimum wage has not been raised in years. President Trump has stated clearly that he does not support an increase. His pro-business stance is clear — for the good of the national economy, low income workers will just have to suck it up.

Regarding climate change, it is clear that the president either doesn't accept it as real or doesn't care about it. His administration is crippling the Environmental Protection Agency and isolating the U.S. from the global response to climate change.

The president's position on immigration is wreaking havoc on the lives of millions of undocumented people in the U.S. Their lives seem unimportant to him, and their contributions to our economy and society are simply ignored. Splitting families has become an acceptable tool for deterring families seeking asylum.

Attorney General Sessions is reversing successful elements of criminal justice reform. He also favors greater use of the death penalty at the federal level. Mr. Trump seems intent on making guns as available as possible.

These and other issues demand a wide and deep discussion across the country. Mr. Trump is taking the country on a dangerous and harmful ride. Concerned citizens must push back and resist.



July 4th picnickers, some with freshly painted faces!

Neighbors, Friends Enjoy Interdependence Day Picnic

Over 120 friends and neighbors celebrated Interdependence Day with us on July 4th. In many ways it was a typical July 4th picnic - food, games, meeting old friends and making new ones. But we weren't just celebrating our independence. Rather, we were acknowledging and celebrating our interdependence, our need for and appreciation of each other.

We were blessed with nice, though hot, weather and a wonderful mix of people: seniors from nearby senior housing complexes, residents of River Garden and the Irish Channel, and members of several organizations that co-sponsored the picnic (Orleans Parish Prison Coalition, Women with a Vision, Fourth World Movement, St. Alphonsus Parish, and Families of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children.

One guest had just been released from prison on July 1st, after 42 years of incarceration. We celebrated his return and welcomed him back to the community. Our thoughts also went out to all who were incarcerated at the Orleans Justice Center, the state penitentiary, and the state's juvenile detention centers.

Everybody agreed that it was great to get together, to eat together, play together, and enjoy each other's company. We hope to do it again before the end of the year.



Acknowledging, Celebrating Our Interdependence

by Don Everard

Reflecting on his own life and work, Albert Einstein once stated, “A hundred times every day I remind myself that my inner and outer life depends on the labors of others, both living and dead, and that I must exert myself in order to give in the same manner as I have received.”

This kind of meditative acknowledgement of our connection to and dependence on others and on nature is a wonderful practice. It keeps us open to and aware of our rightful role in the world - giving what we have, accepting what we need, and relishing the interactions.

Einstein goes on to remind us that “a human being is part of the whole, a part limited in time and space.” He notes that when we experience ourselves as separate from the rest, we are really suffering from “a kind of optical delusion of consciousness.” To free ourselves from this “prison,” Einstein recommends “widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

There are so many opportunities for this kind of meditation. Every person, every thing, every event can be an entrance point into the gracefulness of interdependence. If we all took time to do this, maybe instead of focusing on what separates us, we might focus on what we hold in common. We might be better able to drop our animosities, stereotypes and “fake news,” so that we can have fruitful conversations that lead to more effective and humane ways of living together and addressing the challenges we must face together.

Hope House is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization located in the St. Thomas-Irish Channel area of New Orleans. We strive to be a Christian community, a visible sign of God’s presence and love, to live and work with the poor, to manifest the human concern of Jesus for all people; to foster dignity and respect for all and to work with others to create a society where truth and justice abide.

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My Prayer for Mr. Trump

By Don Everard

In the Acts of the Apostles there is a famous story about a transformative event in the life of a Saint Paul, previously named Saul. Saul, “still breathing threats and murder against the followers of Jesus,” gets permission to arrest them. He is traveling to Damascus just for this purpose when a light from heaven flashes around him and he falls to the ground. He hears a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” The rest of the story describes his conversion and transformation from persecutor to apostle.

I have to confess that this story has taken on a new life for me in the last year. I pray daily for God to knock President Trump from his high horse and lay out for him a path to conversion and transformation. I don’t expect God to do this in a spectacular, Hollywood-like manner, although Mr. Trump would probably prefer it that way. I just pray that he finally hears and sees what so many people have been trying to get him to hear and see.

It’s interesting that in Paul’s conversion story people who have every reason to fear him and despise him take him in, care for him, pray over him and share with him their faith and vision for the world. This fearless and compassionate approach to Saul, surely played a vital role in his change of heart.

So, I pray that God uses us to knock President Trump off his horse, not because we despise him or fear him, but because he is a wayward child of God, doing serious damage to his brothers and sisters - and himself. His transformation would speak powerfully to the world.



Teachers and graduates, from left to right: Don Everard, Chatawa Matthews, Keith Faciane, Latrel Moodie, Sr. Lillian Flavin, Kewanda Baxter, and Lori Williams. Holofa Matias, not shown, took the photo.

Graduates Reflect On Earning Their Diplomas

Kewanda Baxter: Becoming a mother at the age of 14 was the hardest! By 21, I had three children and no guidance. Not really knowing how important school is, I quit – not realizing that I was quitting on myself. Taking care of three children – with no help – was overwhelming.

Finding jobs was the worst for me. I could only get housekeeping jobs, where I damn near broke my back bending over all day long. One day, looking at my kids, I wondered what I was going to do.

I started to realize that my parents hadn't graduated from high school and how hard it was for them to take care of us. I decided to go back to school. I knew it wouldn't be easy, but I vowed to never give up on myself or allow my children to quit. So I enrolled in 2011. It's been a roller coaster ride, but God gave me the opportunity and the means to earn my diploma. Thank you, Lord!

I felt there was a generational curse on my family, and I set out to break it. No one in my immediate family had graduated. I refused to allow that curse to continue. I'm blessed to say that all my kids and I are graduates.

God is so awesome. He led me to Hope House, where I met the sweetest people who really believed in me, even when I couldn't see the forest for the trees. I'm forever grateful to Sr. Lillian and Don. Thanks for being part of my family's journey. I will never forget your embraces as I walked across the stage. It was like an out of body experience for me (floating). Both of you are god-sent angels!

Chatawa Matthews: After several years of trying on my own to earn my diploma, I called Hope House to get some assistance. Sadly, after about six months, I was unable to continue attending class. I was sure it would be impossible.

Then, in June 2017, I decided to return to Hope House and give it one more try. Sister Lillian was overjoyed at my return. And on April 11, 2018 I completed all my exams and earned my diploma. This achievement could not have happened without the teachers at Hope House. I am forever grateful for their patience and love.

Thanks so very much to Sister Lillian Flavin and Don Everard. Being able to graduate with my peers was absolutely beautiful. Finally, I made it!

Latrel Moodie: My husband introduced me to Sister Lillian during the summer, 2017. I was so eager to get my GED then, but I could not fit school into my busy schedule.

Fast-forward to January, 2018. I made getting a better job my New Year's resolution. All the available jobs wanted a high school diploma, its equivalent or experience. After a few job applications and no responses, I knew I had to go to school. I went to Hope House, registered and started my educational journey.

Getting to class was an uphill battle. I had a busy work schedule – six days per week. I requested one day off to get more hours in the morning class. I was always ripping and running. I stayed up late on many nights practicing math. I fell asleep many nights with my workbooks as my pillow.

Hope House was my Rock of Gibraltar. It did not matter how tired or drained I was. Whenever I got to class I was encouraged and uplifted. My tutors were the best! They greeted me with a smile, a pat on the back, a nudge on the shoulder, words of encouragement, and even a "thank you" for making it to class. That was enough fuel for me.

It was not only an educational and personal journey, but also a spiritual one. I cried and wanted to give up on numerous occasions, but most of all I was prayed up and never gave up. I got my diploma on May 2, 2018.

I graduated on June 16, 2018. I was overwhelmed. I cried. I laughed. But most of all, I walked across that stage and collected my diploma. That was proof that I was not a failure, but an achiever. I was able to share that day with family, friends and well-wishers. I accomplished something that was worthwhile. It is my new foundation for a brighter future. Thank you, Hope House!

Around Hope House And the Neighborhood

Chris Robinson recently joined the staff of Hope House. Chris was born and raised in the Saint Thomas Public Housing Development. He spent a lot of time in the gym when he was a kid. Now he is working at the gym, supervising the young people, organizing activities for them and making friends.



Our newest staff member, Chris Robinson

Chris graduated from Fortier High School in 2003. He has attended Eastern Oklahoma State College on a basketball scholarship and Delgado Community College here in New Orleans. He hopes to earn his Associate Degree in Business Management within a year.

Just before Chris joined our staff, he was interviewed by Times Picayune reporters for a special series of articles called "The Children of Central City." A lot of the guys he grew up with didn't make it. Chris did, and has committed himself to helping kids grow up well.

We're very excited to have Chris on our team at Hope House.

Joanika Davis has taken a leave of absence from her volunteer work with our after-school recreation program in order to care for her ailing father in San Diego. Her dad is extremely ill and recovering from cancer and bone marrow replacement. Prayers for Joanika and her dad are much appreciated.

Prayers are also requested for two neighbors, **Joyce** and **Irene**. Joyce, who receives a monthly SSI payment of \$750 pays \$650 rent. She is recovering

from a broken hip and has high blood pressure and diabetes. Using her walker, she walked 7 blocks in the hot sun to see if we could help her with her utility bill, which was for over \$400 and over a month past due. We paid it to prevent a disconnect. We drove her home. But what happens next month?

Irene just finished radiation treatment and has started chemotherapy. She is well into her 70's and very independent. The cancer and therapies have weakened her, so she needs more care. She came to Hope House to get food from our pantry and to see if we could help her with a utility bill.

There are so many similar stories.....

Thanks and God Bless!

Plagiarizing Albert Einstein, we say to all of you who have supported us through prayer, service and financial gifts that many times each day we remind ourselves that our inner and outer lives depend on the labor and love of you and so many others, both alive and dead, and that we must exert ourselves in the same manner as we have received.

Hope House, Inc.	
Income-Expenses	
July 1, 2017—June 30, 2018	
Income:	
Donations	135,404
Grants	186,109
Program income	22,065
Interest/dividends	3,062
Total Income	346,640
Expenses by Program	
Adult Education	94,395
Emergency Assistance	96,187
Career Development	23,974
Youth Recreation	17,554
Coffee House	6,200
Management/General	97,240
Total Expenses	335,550