

# Hope House Journal

summer 2016

## Five Day Notice to Vacate - A Common Summer Posting

Summer is supposed to be a more relaxed, stress-free time of the year. But for many, it is a time of struggle just to keep a roof over the family's heads.

Many single parent mothers work in schools as custodians, cafeteria workers, teacher's aides, etc. Many are laid off for a month or two during the summer. They are not paid, and their regular paychecks during the year are too small to be able to put aside money to cover the summer months.

The situation is much the same for many service workers. Business is slower in the summer for many companies, especially tourist related businesses. Staff work fewer hours or are laid off for periods of time. People still have to eat, pay rent and utilities, and other recurring bills, but have less cash to do so.

As one woman recently said, "I struggle all year around just to cover the basics. But during the summer, I just can't make it on my own. Thank God that Hope House could help me with this electric bill."

During June and July, over 245 people called Hope House seeking rental assistance. Another 76 called seeking utility assistance. We were able to assist 18 households with rent and 46 with utilities - a very small fraction of the people in need.

People call from across the metropolitan area of New Orleans. But, because our funds are so limited, we rarely assist people who live outside our immediate service area - the St. Thomas, Irish Channel, and Lower Garden District neighborhoods.

It pains us greatly to tell so many people that we can't help them. Even more, it pains us to tell them that we don't know of any other places that are doing rent assistance.

What happens to all these people and their families? Many get evicted and struggle to find another, even cheaper place to live. Some go to emergency shelters. Others borrow money from relatives and friends, often knowing that they won't be able to pay it back. Sometimes, landlords hold off on the eviction, sympathetic to a tenant's plight and hoping that things turn around quickly.

The psychic toll is heavy on everyone involved. Why do we (nation, state, city) have such a haphazard, terribly under-funded way of dealing with something so vital as housing?



A sad, but not uncommon scene on the streets of low-income neighborhoods in New Orleans and any other city across the United States. A cruel, but not unusual punishment for the "crime" of being poor.

## Whole Food Stores To Donate 5% of August 10 Sales to Hope House

If you live in New Orleans and need to "make groceries" around August 10, we invite you to shop at one of the Whole Food Markets in the city. The Magazine and Broad Street stores have offered to promote Hope House on that day and to donate 5% of the stores' sales to support our work.

We are very excited about Whole Food's generous offer. Hope House staff members will be at each store during part of the day to tell people about our work, answer their questions, and thank them for shopping at Whole Food Market.

All funds donated on the 10th will be used to support and enhance our after-school recreation program at the Redemptorist Gym. We are grateful to the Whole Food family and to the thoughtful person who recommended us to Whole Food for consideration.

# Black Lives Matter. All Lives Matter. Or So We Say....

From a deeply human, spiritual point of view, of course black lives matter. All lives matter. We are all bound together in a love that embraces all and transcends each of us. Most of us believe this. Most of us like to think we do a pretty good job of living it in our daily lives.

But to varying degrees we are also bound by another worldview, another way of seeing and interpreting the world around us. In this worldview I am in competition with everyone else; I have to take care of "number one." Everything outside of me exists for my use.

In one view, other people and nature in general are valuable in their own right. In the other view, everybody and everything is valuable to the degree that he/she/it benefits me.

If we are honest with ourselves, we recognize that we are part of both worlds. In our minds, we play up the innate value of others and other things. In practice, we sometimes or often manipulate others for our own benefit. We quietly benefit from ideas, policies, and organizations that are abusive to others and to nature. We ignore and deny the facts; we rationalize our actions/inactions; we blame the victims.

We pray for a better world, but continue to support and benefit from what is wrong with this one. Too often, we have gotten comfortable with "the way things are." We make an uneasy peace with a broken, unfair system.

Black lives and other lives too often matter for what someone can get from them. Prisons, especially private companies that run prisons for profit, need black lives. Their business plans depend on the incarceration of black and brown people. The profitability of fast food restaurants is inversely proportional to the wages paid to their mostly black and brown workers. Slum landlords have a similar relationship with their tenants.

Even social problems like poverty, homelessness, and hunger are so often seen in terms of how they affect me. The focus is on me. "It makes me uncomfortable to see all the people sleeping under the bridge." "It's not fair that I should have to pay higher taxes so that those people can get food stamps." "Black lives matter; hell, what about my life?"

Ignoring and denying the inequities, the pain,

the abuse don't make things better. Ignoring and denying create stress, anger and guilt. They push us to isolate ourselves more and more poor and oppressed people.

If black lives matter, if all lives matter, our personal lives and our social and economic structures should proclaim it clearly. Do they?

## My Recurring Dream

In my dream, which seems to recur every time there is a mass killing that involves guns, I invent a machine that can end gun violence. When turned on and set for a certain level of molecular vibration, it permanently freezes every gun's firing mechanism across the planet.

The effect is amazing. Murder rates drop everywhere. Armies, police departments, organized crime, terrorists, gun enthusiasts and weapons manufacturers are stunned. They are totally confused and at a loss as to what they should do with themselves.

Some people are thrilled, seeing it as divine intervention, an answer to their prayers for peace. Others are angry, feeling that one of their basic rights has been unlawfully taken away. Many from this latter group are also afraid, worried that someone else might still have a gun.

Given the nature of my invention, I don't worry about being shot. But there are still many ways to maim or kill. I worry about being beaten by an angry man swinging a rifle. Thankfully, I wake up before it happens.



It's just a dream, an unconscious way of dealing with mass murder. There is no such machine, and even if there was, it would probably be declared unconstitutional, sought out and destroyed. Then we'd go back to manufacturing and using bigger and more dangerous guns.

So, we still have to deal with guns realistically. If you have a gun, melt it down; if you don't have one, don't get one. Work with others to change laws, amend constitutions. Don't watch television shows and movies that glorify gun violence, and let sponsors and producers know what you are doing and why. Live and teach non-violence. Treat each other with love and respect.

Don Everard

# After School Recreation Takes On New Energy

Joanika Davis and Keisha Scott have now been on the job at the Redemptorist Gym for three months. When you go into the gym, you know it's a good place to be.

The place is clean and neat. Children's artwork fills the bulletin boards and spills over onto the walls. Some of the young people are coloring or playing table games. Others are watching a movie. Some are just running around and chasing each other. The older guys are playing basketball.

Joanika and Keisha are always on the move: chatting with a couple of children, getting a game or colors for a few budding artists, admiring the artistic prowess of a 6 year old, applauding a three-point shot on the basketball court, and always watching, supervising.

Over 140 young people are signed up for the program. Typically, about one-third show up on any given day.. Fridays, many more.

We're most grateful to the Redemptorists and St. Alphonsus Parish for giving us access to the gym and to so many donors who enable us to keep the doors open.



## Getting a Job Is Hard Work

Chris had been working with Catina Carter, our career coach, for months. They were working to find him a job. It's been really hard work, and having a felony conviction only made it harder. Chris is a big, strong, young, well-spoken black man. He has worked in warehousing, pipefitting, and welding. He'd made good money, \$14 to \$18 an hour.

Chris filled out countless job applications, answered a multitude of on-line job questionnaires, attended training sessions. Several times he thought he would be hired; but the felony conviction got in the way. Numerous times he came to Hope House and confided that he was sorely tempted to go out and get some money any way he could. With Catina's encouragement and assistance, however, he stayed legal and kept trying

Finally, he heard that the city's Street Department was hiring. The position was for filling pot holes. The pay? About \$11/hr. Not great, but the city's abundance of pot holes at least offered a crazy kind of job security. Its commitment to hiring ex-offenders probably made the difference. Chris got the job.

Chris is glad to be working. The work is hard, especially on these hot summer days. But it's honest work that helps pay the bills.

There are a lot of people like Chris looking for work. Many have convictions. They need a chance to show that they are more than their records. They need the dignity that comes with work. They need an honest income in order to participate in their communities.



*Yes, your donations do help!  
Please help if you can.*



# In and Around Hope House....

Since April, we lost three longtime staff members. Delores Thomas joined the staff in 1998, taking care of the morning coffee house and keeping Hope House tidy. She really loved and appreciated the men that came to the coffee house each morning. Delores's health has been declining for some time, and she finally concluded that she could no longer do the work.

Sylvia Hammond and Theresa Williams joined our staff together in 2004. Like Delores, they lived in and cared about the neighborhood. They supervised the after-school recreation program at the Redemptorist Gym. Both had been struggling for some time with serious health issues. It wasn't long after Sylvia resigned that Theresa followed. They were a team!

Best wishes to Delores, Sylvia and Theresa!

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Roshurn Tennessee lives two blocks from Hope House. She was looking for a job, and we were looking for someone to take Delores's place. We had gotten to know her after one of her sons was shot to death last year. He had been playing at the gym and had left a short time before the shooting occurred. It was a very difficult time for her, and for us.

Roshurn is a bit shy. She takes good care of all the men and women who come to the coffee house, and she likes the place to stay neat and clean. We are so happy to have her with us!

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Sister Lilianne recently visited family and friends in Ireland. She climbed mountains, walked along beaches, visited old, familiar historic sites, read up on the 1916 Easter Rising, enjoyed the cool weather and good craic (translate as general banter and fun).

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Since the shooting by police and the shooting of police in Baton Rouge and other locations, we have been thinking about how we can respond. This is especially important to us because there is a good bit of talk in our neighborhood about young guys flashing their

guns, showing off. Nothing much has actually happened, but at least some of our neighbors are uncomfortable and afraid. There is a fever of fear. How do we deal with it? How do we make things better non-violently? How do we foster an ongoing conversation that leads to a safer, more forgiving and more inclusive community? Hopefully, we'll be able to share our successes and shortcomings in the near future

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For the past 10 or so years Hope House has hosted the meetings of the Orleans Parish Prison Reform Coalition. The group has been instrumental in promoting a small, safe and humane jail in New Orleans and a greater use of alternatives to incarceration. It has been an honor for us to provide this service.

With the opening of the Corpus Christi Community Center on St. Bernard Avenue, it is likely that OPPRC will have its meetings there. Don't worry. There's been no falling out between Hope House and OPPRC. We will continue to be very involved members of the coalition. The Corpus Christi site is simply more centrally located with a greater range of room options for meetings.

## Income and Expenses

July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016

(not audited)

### Income

Donations	130,413
Private Grants	80,560
Government Grants	112,349
Interest and Dividends	3,368
Program Income	21,447
Total Income	348,137

### Expenses (by program)

Adult Education	108,971
Emergency Assistance	105,240
Youth Recreation	34,737
Career Development	3,960
Coffee House/Resource Center	5,481
Affordable Rental	9,537
Management/General	86,050
Total Expenses	373,976