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Newsletter

Spring 2019

Ending Homelessness One Family and One Child at a Time

From the Director's Desk



Perhaps every moment is a learning moment, perhaps every moment is a teaching moment. I just learned from our local Early Childhood Advisory Council that one in every three children in our county is born into poverty. One in three children. What can we learn from this? Who can we teach? Most of us, as we progress and move forward in life, are presented with teachable moments that allow us to help others to gain insights and awareness. Likewise, we encounter people in our lives who become our teachers, who help us open our eyes to new ways of looking at and understanding this so often confusing and complicated world we live in, especially when it is difficult to make sense of the suffering we see.

Statistically, children born into poverty do not have the same opportunities as children born into better circumstances. According to the

2018 Federal Poverty Guidelines, the income poverty line for a family of four is \$25,100. The reality is that a family of four needs to earn twice that to meet their basic needs (National Center for Children in Poverty). Families are falling through the cracks. I will be first in line to tell you that homelessness and poverty continue to be major obstacles to the families in our area. I see it firsthand on a daily basis.

Thankfully, there is another learning moment here. While we cannot change “what has been,” we can absolutely continue to create positive change in “what will be.” We can commit to continuing to move forward in helping families move out of poverty by providing them with the tools and resources they need to do so. And we do this in the knowledge and confidence that each and every one of you is walking with us on this path. For this, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

- Ola Boswell, Executive Director

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“I want to tell you how grateful I am. You do not have to be helping me but you are and I truly appreciate you for that. Just know it will not go to waste. I might have been knocked down, but I get up and keep moving. I am strong and know more than ever what is best for me, and it will benefit my son because of that.” - *Christina*, Deep Roots Resident

Carl's Corner - *Founding Deep Roots: The Power of Doing Things*, by founder Carl Mazza



What we believe is important, truly, but what we do changes the world around us, inspires others, and is the part of us that lives forever in time. This remarkable story is about two young teenaged girls who were experiencing homelessness and living at Clairvaux Farm in its early years, the late-1980's. To know them then – carrying a heavy load of neglect and abuse, distracted and absent parents, spending so much of those years going from living in the woods to crowded and abusive homes of strangers, enduring a spotty education while seeing their peers advancing their lives and laying the foundation for a prosperous adulthood – to know them then, we might wonder how there would be any hope for them. These two bright girls, ill-prepared for life, seemed to be growing headlong into to a life of poverty and desperation like their homeless parents.

Now their story fast-forwards two decades, to a warm spring evening in 2012. Laurie and Tracey are now mothers themselves, with homes of their own. On that remarkable night, while sitting at Laurie's kitchen table in her modest working class Delaware neighborhood, they began to imagine a new plan to help children experiencing homelessness. Their mutual vision had come to them through their years of hard work and struggle to escape the nightmare of their own childhoods. With no family support, they had made their successful journey alone, from destitute children, homeless and moribund, to independent adults. Now they yearned to share what they had found with children still trapped in homelessness.

Tracey was the first to call their new idea "Deep Roots." Their aim was to create a different kind of homeless outreach, one not focused on shelter beds and soup kitchens, but rather on the unique spiritual and educational needs of the children and young people who, like they themselves once were, are caught in a fearful descending spiral not of their own making. They wanted to intervene, to be a family to those whose families were too broken to offer help; to be friends to those who could not even imagine what a supportive friendship might be; to be lamps to those in need of someone to light the way to a bountiful future they as children could not have dared even to imagine.

These two women weren't rich, except in their desire to make a difference in the lives of homeless children. They started with no tangible resources, not even seed money, yet they had a wealth of creative energy and they believed wholeheartedly in their mission. They were willing to work hard to see it accomplished, and so they started simply by doing. They developed a list of children in need and set about contacting families, many of whom were living in shelters, and planned their first educational event: a trip to Ocean City, Maryland. Many of us wondered how a trip to the shore could be anything more than a happy diversion. How could a beach trip possibly help to end homelessness for a child? We soon learned that Ocean City had been a turning point, especially in Laurie's life, and they knew its potential as a singular mind-opening event. In looking back to her own homelessness at Clairvaux Farm, Laurie remembered how her young imagination had been aroused by other young people, kids her own age, who came as volunteers with churches and other outreach groups. Just by meeting and becoming friends, they became powerful role models for each other. Laurie's thinking was stirred by hearing the experiences of teenagers like herself who were able to live on their own by working a summer job at the beach. Their example gave her the courage to move past all the limitation and doubt she lived with and take a leap forward, risking all that she also could do it. And in that sweeping summer in Ocean City she was reborn, heart and soul, and on her way to a brand new life. She left the mental prison of a world of charity, scant means, and constant desperation, and entered a universe lush and alive with possibilities. Now as adults, returning to Ocean City as leaders of Deep Roots, she and Tracey passed the gift of wonder and the power of imagination they had been given on to others – to homeless children, many actually seeing the great ocean, with all its limitless promise, for the first time.

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Kid's Corner



"Deep Roots is a really fun place to live and play and have fun and to make new friends. It's full of amazing adventures!" - Aiden, 11 years old

Aiden | |

"I think Deep Roots is a fun place to meet new friends and I think it's cool that they give us places to go like on field trips and that stuff." - Ethan, 9 Years old

Ethan 9

A Mentor Story

By Kelsey Eastman



One of the most important things a person can do while volunteering at Deep Roots is to create a connection with our residents. To interact with them, and show them that they care. Our mentors do that weekly with the Deep Roots children. One mentor – mentee relationship that I would like to highlight this time is between our volunteer, Anthony, and our student, Josh. They have been paired together for about nine months now, and the impact that has been made is profound- for both the student and the volunteer. Here is the story Anthony would like to tell:

“I am very lucky in life. I've worked hard and it has paid off for me. I have a saying: If you work hard, you get lucky. I am also grateful for everything life has provided me, especially my wonderful wife and my job. You see, I work for Salesforce and that is where the story begins. Salesforce has a philosophy modeled after the Hawaiian culture centered around the Ohana - meaning family. Besides having trust and equality as pillars of our Ohana, Salesforce encourages all employees to give back through volunteering. Each employee is expected to volunteer at least 56 hours per year. But again, this is just where the story begins.

I approached Deep Roots to become a volunteer and was assigned the role of mentor for Josh. We've done many things together including some volunteering, fishing, or practicing real life skills such as how taxes work, budgeting, and applying for jobs. I meet with Josh every week to be his mentor. I try to be "mentor-ly" and teach him to invest in his future, create a budget, and envision his future. But I think that I may be learning even more from Josh. Yes, I am learning about Josh and the Deep Roots community, but I am also learning about myself and how to be vulnerable while connecting with Josh. I continue to hope that sharing my time and experiences with a young man on his way through life's journey will make as much difference in his life as he has made in mine.”

The volunteer possibilities are endless here at Deep Roots, from our general volunteer opportunities to sharing your own interests and expertise. Any interests in volunteering, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Kelsey Eastman, at volunteer@deeprootsinc.org or (302) 588-2159.



Blessings

By Board President, Pastor Terri Martin

The scripture says, “In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Sometimes, the challenges of life can make us feel like the weight of the world is on our shoulders. Our circumstances seem to be more than we can bear. To think you should consider yourself blessed and give thanks while you’re going through such difficulties seems to be nothing short of ridiculous. Anyone aware of the burdens you carry can understand why you’re so distraught. Take a closer look, it doesn’t say for everything give thanks,

it says “IN” everything give thanks. No matter what you’re going through, there are always blessings in the midst of the storm. C.S. Lewis says, “When we lose one blessing, another is often most unexpectedly in its place.”

To see the blessings in the little things helps us to realize that no matter how bad things might be, there is always an opportunity for things to get better. God is always with us. He turns trials into triumphs, struggles into strengths, heaviness into joy and burdens into blessings. You see, there are blessings all around us. Each new day is a blessing but we have to choose to see it that way. How we look at the ability to see the stars shine at night, feel a breeze on our face, smell the first bloom in spring, taste the sweetness of a strawberry, or hear the birds chirp a song is completely up to us. These are amazing blessings that we take for granted day after day instead of seeing them for what they are: tiny little blessings that come free of charge, and there are so many more.

It’s such a blessing watching each Deep Roots family as they turn from a look of despair to a look of hope. To hear the excitement in their voices as they accomplish the milestones they’ve set for themselves. The gratitude expressed for seeing a future of hope where there was none. The blessings offered through the collective work and contributions of many generous people make it all possible. We all play a part in each other’s lives. No matter which end of the spectrum you might be on, you’re a blessing to someone.

Ending Homelessness One Family and One Child at a Time

In addition to serving as a homeless shelter for children and families in the community, Deep Roots strives to break the generational cycle of homelessness. Our program encourages children and their parents to envision a brighter future, to sustain healthy relationships, and to navigate a course towards personal and social responsibility. Through better life experiences, with mentors, and by providing healthy life-models, education, and supports, Deep Roots seeks to show our families that homelessness is not destiny...

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There was no sermonizing; simply friendship and loving presence, the dynamic that had been so influential in their own lives. Laurie recruited supporters to help on the trip, while Tracey canvassed local businesses, gathering resources, everything from donated tickets to the amusement rides to sunglasses, snacks, bottled water and pizza. In their simple commitment to doing something that would make a difference in their world, they began the program, which has grown continuously ever since. Today Deep Roots has an annual budget of nearly five hundred thousand dollars, myriad volunteers, a dedicated staff, and, since the acquisition of Clairvaux Farm, the facilities and resources to empower scores of children and their families in their journey out of homelessness.

It has been my good fortune to have been with these two incredible women from the day I first met them as children at Clairvaux Farm to that momentous evening we sat together at Laurie's kitchen table. Laurie and Tracey accomplished miracles simply because they set out to do ordinary, mundane tasks which, put together, gave rise to transformed lives and brought new worlds into being. Remembering their own suffering as children, they put themselves to work, building with ideas turned into deeds, like bricks, one upon another, changing the world around them, and laying this solid foundation for the future of all who would ever be part of Deep Roots: *"Jesus said... truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you."* (Matthew 17:20)

The Trips We Take - by Todd Flenniken

The trips we take at Deep Roots mean a whole lot more than simple sightseeing or touring. When Deep Roots was formed over 6 years ago, one of the cornerstones of the program was a monthly outing for the children to play, grow and be exposed to a world they might not otherwise have access to. Deep Roots has grown in leaps and bounds since those early days. However, the regular outings and field-trips are still a cornerstone and an extremely vital part of our program. To see a child's face light up when they see something they've never seen at The National Aquarium in Baltimore... Or when they touch something different at The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia... Or even when they're able to just cut loose and have fun cheering and rooting for the Orioles at Camden Yards, or having fun on a canoe ride at Turner's Creek. Their joy is perhaps the biggest dividend we can hope to achieve as an organization. While providing shelter and safety fills an immediate and essential need for the children and families in our program, the trips we take together give our kids an avenue to a better tomorrow. You really never know where or when something might "click" in a child's mind, and make them think, "Hey, I want to learn more about that!" The ripple effect of that can be far reaching and very rewarding for their future and ours! For more information on these monthly events, please visit our website's Events Calendar. Donations towards events are greatly appreciated!



Did you know....? That donating money to Deep Roots is as easy as shopping with **Amazon Smile**? Amazon donates 0.5% of your Amazon Smile purchases to Deep Roots when you shop at **smile.amazon.com**. Designate "Deep Roots Inc." as your charity of choice!
***We are a United Way of Cecil County Partner Agency**

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or to donate online, please visit the Donate page on our website:
www.deeproootsinc.org

Deep Roots is extremely grateful for all your contributions—*thank you!* In addition to monetary, food, and goods donations, please check out our *Current Needs List* on our website at deeproootsinc.org/ongoing-needs/. Donations are tax deductible. Please call or email us at: (410) 275-2194 or info@deeproootsinc.org for additional information.