



The Open Door Newsletter



The Open Door, PO Box 99243, Pittsburgh, PA 15233 412.231.2178

November, 2008, #2

Open Door Resident Gets a Kidney Transplant

John (name has been changed to protect confidentiality) came to his interview for The Open Door on January 8th, 2007 and was joined by several members of his family. This was a very unusual circumstance, since many of our residents do not have family members in their lives to support them. However, John's family was adamant that our program was the right match for them. As a result of untreated mental health issues and drug use, John had been unable to keep a stable home. Although he was already on antiretroviral treatment and doing well at taking his meds, John often missed doctors and dialysis appointments, which had been affecting his ability to stay well. He was also unable to get on the kidney transplant list because of his active drug use.

With the support of The Open Door, John was able to eliminate his drug use and become adherent with his medical and dialysis appointments. These changes made him eligible for the kidney transplant list. John received a new kidney on June 13, 2008 and is now stable. He is currently living with family due to the medical complications of his transplant, and the resulting need for daily medical support. John is very much missed by The Open Door family as he was a positive spirit in the house. He spread his passion for cooking wonderful meals to the other residents by creating group meals and teaching others his recipes. We wish John and his family the best of health.



Staff Changes for The Open Door

There have been several exciting changes to the staff of The Open Door. Jerome moved on to other pursuits, and is doing well in his new job. In addition to Lisa, Yvette and Nate, we have recently added a new staff member. Sheila works full time at the East Liberty Family Health Care Center as an HIV prevention specialist, and spends her evenings with our Open Door residents. Sheila has been a well known community advocate since 1998. She has risen above the stigma associated with HIV, and since 2000, has identified herself as living with the illness in the community and in the media. In fact, Sheila's strength and advocacy work has been featured in several national publications. It has been a pleasure to welcome Sheila as our newest peer resident monitor.



Sheila

Other exciting news about staff – TWO OF THEM GOT MARRIED! TO EACH OTHER! Nate and Yvette, program managers of The Open Door, were married on Saturday, July 26th 2008. Nate and Yvette had known each other for several years through their mutual work. When we hired them in May 2006, they worked very closely to build the job description of The Open Door monitors, and to make our program what it is today. Shortly after they were promoted to co-managers of The Open Door, they shyly reported that they were a couple and were worried that this would affect their job status. We could not be happier for them. We wish them much love, happiness, and understanding -- the same gifts they have given so abundantly to our residents.

Donor Spotlight: Julie Falleroni & Bill Wolfe

Julie Falleroni, Bill Wolfe and family have been one of the biggest supporters of The Open Door since it's inception. When the family set out to pick an organization to donate to, Julie sat Elias down to help. After carefully explaining each charity and it's function, Elias chose The Open Door. The entire family is staying in Guam while Mom completes her tour of duty as a Physician in the Navy.

In explaining her passion for The Open Door, Julie says "I have always felt strongly that 'home' is so important to a person's health and well being. How

can anyone focus on health, or finances, or living well, or improving his or her life when you don't even have a safe haven to go to at the end of the day? Home or shelter is more than a physical structure, it is part of our human heritage. It is a symbol of being part of a community. To be "homeless" in the literal or figurative sense is to lack a fundamental connection to your fellow human beings. Anything that someone can do to bring a fellow human being back into a social network is good for us all."



Julie, Linnea, Elias, Henry & Bill

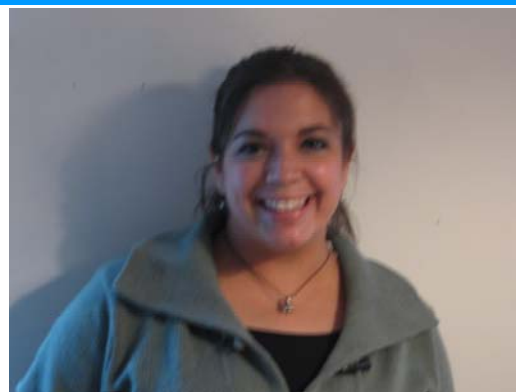
Health Relationship Workshops

Every month for the past year, Janice Goldsborough has been coming to The Open Door and running hour long therapy sessions with the residents. The sessions center on abuse, healthy relationships, relationship expectations, how your past affects your choices, what has worked and not worked, and why. Most importantly, they work on recognizing what is best for the client; take care of themselves emotionally in any relationship, not just romantic relationships.

Janice is the Medical Advocacy Supervisor for the Women's Center & Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh. Janice holds degrees in Criminal Science, Human Resources Management and Organizational Leadership. She states that "I love coming to The Open Door. The clients are working on living the best life they can and are there for each other. Everyone seems to really enjoy the sessions, but I think I get more out of it than they do. It's a joy to be there—like being among friends."



Residents Go Back To Work



Sara Dix is the Program Coordinator for Project Employ, the vocational program at Bethlehem Haven. Project Employ develops life skills, job training and supportive employment for homeless men and women. Sara has held several workshops at The Open Door about vocational activity and goals for productive involvement. After only a few sessions at The Open Door, Sara has gotten one resident enrolled in Project Employ. Thrilled about his enthusiasm for the program, Sara is confident that he will benefit from the internship placement.

Future plans include bringing three different groups of students from her "Occupational Therapy in Mental Health" class at Chatham University to The Open Door. The plan is to facilitate life skills group session with the residents in areas of Improving Self-Esteem, Stress Management, etc. Sara hopes to open the eyes of the students to social justice issues as well as the needs and strengths of the clients. While providing the residents with quality life skills group sessions in their own environment.