

winter 2007 newsletter

success stories



Photo: Joshua Zuckerman



Speaker Roland Knight, Sr. Paulette LoMonaco and New Board President and Honoree James J. Sullivan

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

This newsletter is full of wonderful examples of the powerful difference that individuals can make in the lives of our vulnerable young people...by serving as role models...by showing they care...by helping them heal...by nurturing their strengths...by expanding their horizons...by being there for them on holidays and special occasions. There are so many ways that positive relationships with caring adults form the building blocks upon which our young people can shape their lives and build a strong future.

While many have direct relationships with our young people, others support our work from a distance by attending a special event, by donating goods or services, or making a financial contribution. Whether directly or indirectly impacting our youth, all these relationships – with staff, Board members, mentors, foster parents, program alumni and committed donors – are central to our ability to realize our mission. What better time than during this season of thanksgiving to express our deep gratitude to all those who partner with us in our work! I hope that this publication helps to convey the critical role you play and that you can take pride in the accomplishments of our program participants.

This newsletter comes with my best wishes to you and your loved ones for the holidays and for peace and health in the New Year.

Sincerely,

Paulette Lo Monaco

What's inside:

A Mother's Love	2
Staying Connected and Giving Back	2
Holiday Magic	3
Annual Fund	4

Successful Dinner and Art Auction Put the Spotlight on Our Youth and Partnerships

The Power of Relationships

Good Shepherd's young people were front and center at Good Shepherd's two fundraisers this fall, our annual dinner at Tavern on the Green on October 24th and our first ever benefit art auction at the CRG Gallery on November 1st, which together brought in more than \$750,000 to support our work.

At this year's Annual Benefit, which honored our new Board President Jim Sullivan, we communicated our impact to attendees through a compelling film focusing on the adolescents with whom we work. It highlighted some of the challenges our young people confront and the hope and new direction they find as a result of the services, supports and opportunities provided by our staff.

Later, Roland Knight, a young man who literally grew up in our Beacon program in Red Hook, Brooklyn, demonstrated just how significantly our work can transform individual lives and the communities we embrace. He described the stresses of growing up in a neighborhood where the innocence of a childhood football game could be shattered in a second by gunfire. Our school-based community center became a safe haven for him and other youth, where they could escape the dangers and negative influences of the streets.

In Roland's case, our program and the investment of nurturing staff have been life altering. "As I found relief," he said, "I also found passion. Being in the company of positive role models and youth workers, I knew I wanted to do the same as them. I knew I could make a difference and impact on a child's life as much as they did for me." Through his position as a Youth Development Specialist in our program and college study, Roland is now pursuing a career in education and childcare.

continued on page 2

FOSTER PARENT PROFILE

A Mother's Love

Doris Govan had a teenage daughter of her own and had already raised two adopted children to adulthood when she agreed to take in three young siblings until another foster home could be found.

Although she had only taken the children, two boys and a girl, on a temporary basis, Ms. Govan never considered giving them less than her best efforts while they were in her care. They had been moved many times already in their short lives, and past trauma had led to behavioral problems and frequent nightmares for all three. She was diligent about bringing the children to therapy and helping them work through their issues. "I watched as Ms. Govan did all she could to make these children – who were a handful – feel cared for and safe," says Sr. Kathleen Duggan, the Program Supervisor

for Good Shepherd's Foster Boarding Home (FBH) division, "and I watched them learn to trust her."

Still, her family was complete already, and Ms. Govan regularly reminded the FBH workers that she had only agreed to take the children until an appropriate home was located. Moving the vulnerable children again was a worrisome idea, but the staff knew that Ms. Govan's wishes had to be respected, and that the emergency placement had already stretched out much longer than originally anticipated.

Then one day shortly before Christmas, Ms. Govan arrived at the FBH offices after dropping the children off at school. "My heart sank," recalled Sr. Kathleen, "I thought she had come to tell me that she simply couldn't keep the children any longer." Instead, Ms. Govan

had come to tell Sr. Kathleen that she had realized she couldn't let the children go. "Sister," she said, "they're staying as long as they need to stay."

More than three years after taking the children on a temporary, emergency basis, Ms. Govan further completed her family by adopting them. An emotional adoption ceremony was memorialized when the children charmed the judge into letting the whole family be photographed on the judicial bench. "Ms. Govan's untiring and unconditional love of these children put their broken hearts at ease," said Sr. Kathleen at Good Shepherd's 2007 Foster Parent Recognition Ceremony. "She made a difference in their lives that will never be forgotten – by them or us."

Staying Connected and Giving Back

After several informal gatherings over the past few years, the Good Shepherd Services Alumnae Organization has been officially launched. Nearly 50 former residents of Good Shepherd's group homes for adolescent girls, ranging in age from their twenties to their fifties, attended the kick-off dinner on October 22nd. "The energy was extraordinary, they really wanted to connect," said Harriet Mauer, Good Shepherd's Director of Social Services, who has been part of our residential staff for more than thirty years. "These women, even if they may not have known one another before, share a history that very few people can understand."

Nancy, who lived at St. Helena's Residence in the 1970s, says, "We often don't feel free to talk about our backgrounds with other people. Even though I'm not ashamed, it just requires so much explaining and you feel so alienated when everyone talks about their families." Coming together with other alumnae as an adult was a revelation. "I was amazed to hear other women saying the things I think and feel about my past! We're a special breed and there needs to be an official place for us."

While Good Shepherd spearheaded the formation of the Organization, it is most definitely

an independent entity, wholly owned by the alumnae themselves. Discussion at the kick-off dinner identified two equally important areas of interest for the group: networking with and

supporting each other, and giving back by helping the current generation of residents. "One of the women was saying she didn't have anyone who sends her cards on holidays,"

continued on page 4



Members of the newly launched Alumnae Organization

Holiday Magic

Christmas came early for close to 200 children from Good Shepherd's Bronx and Brooklyn after-schools as they and their families experienced a magical morning at FAO Schwarz on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Thanks to the generosity of longtime GSS supporter Richard Fields, and the partnership of the legendary toy store, the five and six year olds were treated to a holiday party they will always remember.

The store opened early to welcome its special guests who proceeded down the red carpet to trumpet fanfare. The festivities continued with breakfast in the ice cream parlor, a session on the world-famous FAO Schwarz piano, a puppet show, face painting, and, best of all, a visit with Santa. Each child had written letters with a gift request prior to the event, and so Santa's gift was personalized, and thus extra special.

The event, the second to be held at FAO Schwarz, builds on a tradition established by Mr. Fields, a Bronx native, in 1995, to make our children feel special at this time of year. Each year, he outdoes himself in his generosity and creativity. The awe on the children's faces was a clear indicator that he had succeeded once again. Over all, the party provided a welcome antidote to the commercialization that vies with the spirit of the holiday season.



All smiles after a visit from Santa



Program participants enjoy making music during the holiday celebration

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The Power of Relationships

The benefit art auction provided another opportunity to showcase our youth and their accomplishments. Auction organizer, Richard Desroche, one of three partners in the Chelsea gallery, made a point of demonstrating the purpose of the fundraiser by introducing two young men and a young woman who were in attendance. All three have lived in one of our residences and have benefited from the mentoring program we have developed for young people in our care. Richard, a committed mentor of one of the youth, described how they are now achieving success in college or employment. This point was further reinforced by the fact that the auction included a piece by one of the young men, a resident of our transitional housing program who is now studying at Cooper Union.

While our two fundraising events affirmed the strengths of our young people, they also

demonstrated the pivotal role of relationships in helping them reach their potential. The warm atmosphere in the room at Tavern was testament to the many family members, friends and colleagues who came out in support of Jim Sullivan. Several of them were part of the Good Shepherd family already because of their involvement in the highly successful Wall Street Challenge golf outing which Jim organizes each year. The contributions of the forty-one artists who donated works to the auction, the generosity of Richard Desroche in organizing the event and making the gallery available for the evening and the wonderful spirit and commitment of Board member and mentor Isaac Mizrahi, who served as perhaps the most entertaining auctioneer ever, all spoke to the power of relationships to transform the lives of our young people.



Event organizer Richard Desroche and Board member and auctioneer Isaac Mizrahi work their magic to raise the bids at the CRG Art Gallery

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YOUR GIFT AT WORK

Matching Gifts

Many companies have a matching gift program. You can maximize your contribution to us by completing the appropriate matching gift form. Please log on to www.goodshepherds.org to see if your company matches gifts.

Workplace Giving

Direct your United Way contribution to Good Shepherd Services by marking **001138** on your pledge card. You will also find us listed in the campaign brochures of the State Employee Federated Appeal, the Combined Municipal Campaign, the Combined Federal Campaign and the CUNY Campaign for Voluntary Charitable Giving.

continued from page 2

Staying Connected and Giving Back

explains Nancy, "We'd like to do things like that for each other, and for the girls in the residences now."

Indeed, the alumnae are in a perfect position to provide to the current residents not only support and understanding, but also positive role models for the future. "This is a very impressive group of women, by any standard," says Harriet. Careers of the alumnae include high school principal, carpenter, librarian, supervisor at the Administration for Children's Services, controller, and social worker, including several who now work for Good Shepherd. Many are mothers and grandmothers, married or in long-term relationships. "I'm very proud," says Nancy, herself a registered nurse working for the Department of Public Health, "Instead of using our difficult childhoods as an excuse, we've used them as an impetus to better ourselves and now we can help other girls do the same."

Alumnae Organization members will also act in an advisory capacity to Good Shepherd, helping us to continually improve our residential services by sharing their unique perspectives. "Those were such important years in our lives," says Nancy, "We were coming out of sometimes dangerous situations into a safe place where we were taken care of very well. The impact was so much greater than we realized at the time."



Photo: Laura Dwight

HOLIDAY GIFT DRIVE

If you are interested in becoming involved with our Annual Holiday Gift Drive, please contact Annie Howard at 212-243-7070, ext. 244 for more information.

ANNUAL FUND

Good Shepherd stands at an especially exciting moment in our history as we continue the second year of implementation of our three-year business plan. We are working to strengthen and deepen our services so that more young people can be helped in making a safe passage to self-sufficiency. By joining with us, you can help us realize our vision for the future – a future that includes broadened services in New York City neighborhoods in need, increased excellence in the provision of those services, and a greater impact in New York and beyond, as we serve as a model for other agencies helping vulnerable youth and families. Please consider helping us reach our Annual Fund goal by sending in your contribution today. Alternatively, you may donate online at: www.goodshepherds.org.



Photo: Laura Dwight

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