# I Am Project HOME

LARHONDA ASIYAH **MUSLIM** 

with updates on how they're doing. That concern never failed to drive her two "Saving Yourself Starts with Welcoming MAT" on page 1). kids crazy, but LaRhonda just saw it as conditioning from her mother who was always trying to help others fix their problems.

whether what she was doing was enough. On

her way to figuring those big questions out,

LaRhonda travelled many different paths.

These paths were rocky, as they involved

experiencing homelessness, substance use

and domestic abuse. But the person that

emerged on the other side, combined with an

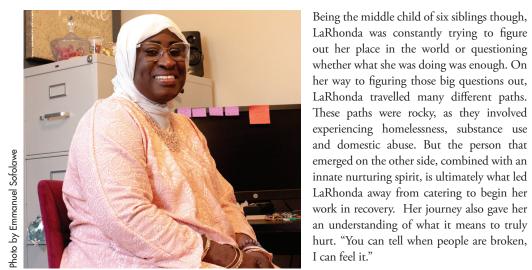
innate nurturing spirit, is ultimately what led

LaRhonda away from catering to begin her

work in recovery. Her journey also gave her

an understanding of what it means to truly

nurt. "You can tell when people are broken,



LaRhonda Muslim HOME's Sacred Heart Recovery Residence in North Philadelphia

As soon as LaRhonda started at Project HOME in 2016, she threw herself into the work. "I couldn't wait to get to work, I couldn't wait to help." Not only does she invest her time but also her emotions and her whole self, so she's says. "And it's an honor to be part of Sister Mary's and Joan's legacy." With had to remember that self-care is important. For LaRhonda, prayer, being in her incredible compassion and commitment, LaRhonda is a vital part of that service through her recovery, cooking, and watching cartoons are her therapy. legacy already.

aRhonda has always been a caregiver, even before she arrived at Project While she started as a residential recovery specialist at Ray Homes, she now HOME's Sacred Heart Recovery Residence. "I was doing catering and I works as an assistant program manager at Sacred Heart Recovery Residence was always counseling," she says, offering people keys to her home, telling (SHRR). SHRR offers about 15 - 20 emergency beds and 48 entry-level them to "rest up" or "take a shower." This didn't just happen at work though. long-term housing units for people who have experienced homelessness LaRhonda could be at a store talking to the sales staff about their day, next and are committed to recovery. It also happens to be just on the outskirts of thing, she's handing over her cellphone number and asking them to call her Kensington, where the opioid epidemic has taken hold of the community (see

> Working at SHRR, LaRhonda has had to tell residents it's okay to shower or sleep in a warm bed, and that they're safe. It's not that straightforward, however, as she says she's watched people come and go, "knowing that the addiction is bigger than them."

> What keeps LaRhonda going on difficult days is not just her nurturing spirit, but her love of the larger Project HOME community, a group she now sees as her "family". She has watched her Project HOME "family's" support and love manifest itself in so many ways over the years. From her manager Sue Smith encouraging her to not try to do everything and just focus on where she thrives, to Project HOME co-founder Joan McConnon talking with her husband for hours at a gathering.

> And Project HOME has benefitted from having LaRhonda as part of our community. "She is committed to help others define and work towards achieving their optimal level of recovery," says Qasim Moore, LaRhonda's manager at SHRR. "She desires to assist others to turn their stumbling blocks into pathways to achievement."

> "I'm so in love with Project HOME and my plan is to retire here," LaRhonda

# With General (Cash) Assistance Eliminated, Your Help is Crucial

With the passage of HB 33, General Assistance has officially been was an impossible struggle, especially for transportation. I was eliminated. Everyone who is currently getting General Assistance lost it on August 1, 2019 - even if they are disabled and cannot work. (More information can be found on Community Legal Service's website at clsphila.org/ga)

We are deeply disappointed about the elimination of General Assistance and grateful for everyone who has been part of the fight to keep it over the last couple of months. We will keep advocating together to restore this benefit through legislative and legal efforts

One of our community members, John, spoke at a press conference in June and shared what it's like to live on General Assistance and how important it is in his life. During a heated debate later that week, his remarks were read on the PA State Senate floor and the video of Senator Katie Muth reading his speech went viral. You can watch the video here: youtu.be/7NYBNKT9DKo

### Here is his inspiring story.

Good afternoon, my name is John. I am here to express my gratitude and ask for your support to protect General Assistance. I am alive today because General Assistance is supporting my stability and helping me live independently

General Assistance is only a temporary program, but I have a personal disability. I am unable to work so I have applied for Social Security Disability Income. If I get SSDI, the state of Pennsylvania will be repaid by the Federal Government for the expenses of my General Assistance.

In four weeks, it will be TWO YEARS since I first applied for

5 During that first year, I had no income and it was awful. It

homeless and living in shelters. I went from church to church, soup line to soup line. It was no way to live. Some days I never ate and slept on benches or on the sidewalks.

Thank God, I now have an apartment and have some assistance to pay for rent, utilities, and food. My life is improving. I'm getting my health together and I'm working toward my GED.

General Assistance is the only money I have to buy deodorant or anything that is not food. That \$205 dollars a month is a

How will I get a bus fare? General Assistance helps me go to my GED class, and see my therapist, psychiatrist, and doctor.

Where will I get the quarters to do my laundry if I don't have

When I look into the future without General Assistance, everything looks likes it going to fall apart—that little income is keeping everything together for me. Will all this progress just

I hope that never happens. Please vote to save General Assistance. Without General Assistance, people have nothing to lean on. This program gives people support and helps us get

Thank you for this second chance at life. Please work to protect General Assistance, and allow it to continue to go on, so people can have a new start, just like me. Thank you for listening!

John is continuing to advocate for the return of cash assistance and asks that you join him. Please write or email your Pennsylvania

elected officials to tell them how you feel about their vote on General Assistance and ask them to restore the program or take action at projecthome.org/advocate.

Another way to help is to please consider dropping off any of the

following items to 1515 Fairmount Avenue, Monday to Friday between 10 am and 5 pm:

- Hygiene Items (Full size bottles -new, unused)
- Shampoo • Body wash
- Deodorant
- Razors
- Shaving gel Face wash
- Face/body lotion
- Toothpaste Paper products
- Paper towels • Toilet paper
- Household items (new) Laundry detergent
- powder or pods Dish soap Clothing (Larger sizes
- preferred) T-shirts
- New underwear Gently worn shoes
- Shorts
- John speaking to the Project HOME community about his experience in



Harrisburg fighting for General Assistance



215-232-7219, ext. 5200



www.projecthome.org

1515 Fairmount Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19130

The mission of the Project HOME community is to

empower adults, children, and families to break the

underlying causes of poverty, and to enable all of us

to attain our fullest potential as individuals and as

members of the broader society.

• 1515 and 1523 Fairmount Avenue

• Connelly House, 1212 Ludlow Street

• Francis House of Peace, 810 Arch Street

• Gloria Casarez Residence, 1315 N. 8th Street

• James Widener Ray Homes, 2101 W. Venango Street

• Sacred Heart Recovery Residence, 1315 Hunting Park Avenue

• Hope Haven I/II, 2827-28 Diamond Street

• IBI Soul Homes, 1415 Fairmount Avenue

• Ruth Williams House, 2415 N. Broad Street

• St. Elizabeth's Recovery, 1850 N. Croskey Street

• Kairos House, 1440 N. Broad Street

• Rowan I, 2729-A W. Diamond Street

• Kate's Place, 1929 Sansom Street

• Rowan II, 1901 N. Judson Street

• St. Columba, 4133 Chestnut Street

• Women of Change, 2042 Arch Street

**Support Services & Programs** 

Neighborhood Services

Healthcare Services

Volunteer Program

Businesses

ext. 3023

215-232-7272

215-232-1984

215-232-6322

Administration

Hub of Hope

Advocacy and Public Policy

• Honickman Learning Center and

Comcast Technology Labs

• Outreach Coordination Center

Stephen Klein Wellness Center

HOME Spun Resale Boutique,

**Homeless Outreach Hotline** 

**Human Resources Hotline** 

HOME Made Products, 215-232-7272,

Personal Recovery Services

Resident Alumni Program

• Adult Education, Employment & Arts

**Our Residences** 

cycle of homelessness and poverty, to alleviate the

**Our Mission** 

## NONE OF US ARE HOME UNTIL ALL OF US ARE HOME®



Project HOME Development and Communications Student Collaborator, Angelique, taking a photo of Stephen Klein Wellness Center's Program Manager Robin DeBates (and her service dog Nugget), for this issue of the newsletter. Angelique is also a photography student of the College Access Program at the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs.

A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling tollfree, within Pennsylvania, 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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# **Saving Yourself Starts with Welcoming MAT**

Lisa is part of a pro-

gram called Medica-

tion Assisted Treat-

ment (MAT) that

has been offered at

SKWC since 2016.

In 2017, PA Center

of Excellence (COE)

status was awarded to

Pathways to Housing

PA, Project HOME

Healthcare Services

and Prevention Point

Philadelphia to allow

Medication Assisted

Treatment of opioid

use disorder.

"It's not like I got high and then I'm here," says Lisa as MAT is designed to combine behavioral therapy with Heart Recovery she sits in the comfort of Project HOME's Stephen Klein medication to treat substance use disorder. In the beginning, Residence. All of Wellness Center (SKWC). "There's just whole decades of only two doctors could provide this treatment at SKWC, Project HOME's how I'm doing."



A Publication of Project HOME

Lisa is part of the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program at the Stephen Klein Wellness Center and says it has saved her life

hurt and struggle." Lisa has been visiting SKWC for the which limited them to thirty patients each. Since weekly permanent suplast seven months to receive her Suboxone, a medication individual appointments were not possible at this number, portive housing that helps her with her opioid dependency, but that's not the Center began offering group sessions. "It's a way for a offers recovery, all she's been receiving from the Center. "They actually group of eight to ten folks to get behavioral health support, including the new call me to make sure I'm going to come in, you know, see to get peer support, and it allows more people access to Maguire Residence care," says Dr. Lara Weinstein, one of the doctors in the in Kensington. In MAT program. Peer support or "group" as it's been dubbed, addition, a new also offers accountability, explains Dr. Weinstein, and can residence currently remove some of the stigma attached with substance use in development, disorder when everyone is coming from a similar place. The Kensington Longprogram has grown so much that SKWC now offers group Term Recovery sessions four times a week with about six providers who Residence, will can prescribe medication. They also partner with Pathways also focus on service dog Nugget), Center of Excellence to Housing (a Housing First provider) and the City of recovery and of-Philadelphia to provide MAT on site at Pathways for their fer the MAT pro- Wellness Center, provides Medication two opioid use disorder-specific teams.

The expansion of the MAT program is critical as the City and the nation faces the greatest public health crisis in a century, that of opioid use disorder and overdose. In 2018, of the 1,116 HOME will expand MAT beyond the SKWC to our Hub to numerous others. "Had I been anywhere else, those of Hope engagement center and our newly opened Sacred



Robin DeBates (with her golden retriever

Expanding the MAT program helps with another goal, according to Robin DeBates, Program Manager of SKWC's Center of Excellence: making help easier to overdoses, more than 900 of them were due to opioids. As get than heroin. And, that help doesn't go away when part of an overall strategy to combat the opioid crisis, Project a patient relapses - which has happened to Lisa - and

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www.projecthome.org

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# From our earliest years, we have recognized the tragic link between homelessness and addiction. Over the

From the Archives: "A Community of Recovery"

years, we have constantly sought to grow in both our understanding of and response to addiction (see "Saving Yourself Starts with Welcoming MAT" above, outlining our new programs and services specifically designed to address the current opioid crisis). With the invaluable wisdom and experience of many of our residents, we continue to work to promote authentic and holistic recovery – both to heal those seeking to break the cycle of homelessness and to a society trapped in many forms of addiction. This reflection was written in our May 1998 newsletter.

It is all too familiar a scene: outside a Center City business to him in anger and spite.



The homeless panhandler - he is an icon of modern America, an eyesore in the gleaming metropolis, an indictment on a society increasingly frayed by vast establishment, a disheveled man asks passersby for spare disparities. He represents a complex nexus of factors: change. For some, his presence evokes compassion; for a personal story of trauma, poverty, and disease, but many, discomfort and confusion. Some people respond also communal abandonment and failed social support

(continued on page 3)

# Roots and Branches: Reflections from Sister Mary

our Recovery Cafés. These are not formal or structured our current efforts for those who are struggling with opioids and homelessness, see "Saving Lives Starts with Welcoming MAT" on meetings, but a time for sharing stories and supporting each page 1.) other. For an hour, it is a space where people are free to be vulnerable, without judgment, and where much hard-earned healing wisdom is given.

The Recovery Cafés were envisioned by and guided by resident a safe and respectful environment where we support each other leaders. These are spaces where our residents, staff, and volunteers in our struggles for self-esteem, recovery, and the confidence to can share their gifts and other members of the community can move toward self-actualization." become engaged in our mission in a deeper way. They also represent our ever-growing understanding of the meaning of and Core to our work is fostering a culture of recovery, where we can urgent need for recovery.



In the immediate sense, this meant from becoming our truest selves. developing services and programs that could empower our residents to

of our community who have struggled

with addiction and traveled the road of

recovery have been our guides and teachers, constantly moving us forward in understanding and practice. (To learn more about

The most important lesson has been that ultimately, recovery is a journey we must all make in community to come to our wholeness as persons. In our mission statement, we state: "We strive to create

acknowledge our struggles and at the same time assert that we are all valued. By sharing our stories, we empower and equip Recovery has been fundamental to our each other with the hope, the wisdom, and the practical tools we mission and work since our beginning. need as we deal with our various and false values that keep us

We also believe that the healing we experience in our community take that next step, which is necessary through our shared journey of recovery can contribute to the r them to get off the streets, move healing of our many social wounds. We need the policies and oward stability and thrive. We have resources that can help us respond to the many faces of addiction earned much along the way – including in our country, including the current devastating opioid crisis. But through mistakes and missteps (see we also need to build that culture of recovery, for all persons, so our archived article "A Community of that America can live up to its truest character and most deeply Recovery" on page 1.) Those members rooted historical value of the dignity of each person.

A Mary Scullin

# Spirit of Generosity: Boyds Philadelphia

"Access to a beautiful, but affordable, suit for folks who have experienced homelessness can make all the difference in how they feel at that job interview," says David Brown, head sales associate at Project HOME's resale store, HOME Spun Boutique. The boutique thrives on clothing donations and support from our beloved community. Donors, like Boyds Philadelphia, partner with our store at street homelessness.

We are truly grateful to the leadership and generosity of the Gushner family and Boyds, who in July, gave us an incredibly generous donation of high-end business



David Brown, head sales associate at Project HOME's HOME Spun Boutique, displaying the suits Boyds Philadelphia generously donated this summer

wear for men, featuring many popular brands including Armani and Brioni. We value our relationship with Boyds, which is one of our strongest and longest established. Their regular donations of men's and women's designer clothing help to change lives in our community by providing access to affordable business attire, something which can be a huge barrier for folks wanting to take that next step 1523 Fairmount Avenue because they wish to join us in our mission to end chronic toward employment. Through our voucher program and inventory from Boyds, we can also offer our community members free clothing from HOME Spun that can help them on their path to finding themselves again.

> But that's not all. These clothing donations help us raise funds to carry out the important work of Project HOME by ensuring that everyone has a roof over their head, a job to go to, access to medical care and education. The real impact of these donations s felt when we see the excitement on our customers' faces as they tell us about their job interview success, all because of how that suit prepared them for that moment.

"Access to a beautiful, but affordable, suit for folks who have experienced homelessness can make all the difference in how they feel at that job interview."

High-quality donations from Boyds helps us spread the word about our store, our mission, and the community it benefits. We love seeing young people thrifting at HOME Spun because it promotes an affordable and sustainable lifestyle -all while supporting Project HOME and its mission. Our partnership with institutions like Boyds Philadelphia can pave the way home for those experiencing homelessness because none of us are home until all of us are home.

HOME Spun Boutique is located at 1523 Fairmount Avenue. Opening hours are Monday to Friday 11 am – 7 pm, Saturday 11 am - 5 pm and closed Sundays.

# Happenings

## Summer Service Learning

Our Summer Service Program recently wrapped up another successful season, giving over 30 rising 10th to 12th-grade students the opportunity to meet with residents, learn about issues like homelessness, poverty, and mass incarceration, and how Project HOME works to address them. The program uses community service as a tool for empowering students to develop their own identities as advocates and agents of change. Students interested in the program can visit projecthome.org/tags/summer-service for alumni stories and for information on next summer's session.



Summer Service-Learning students volunteer at Project HOME's Francis House of Peace

College Access Program Graduation

In July, we celebrated the 2019 graduates and alumni of the College Access Program (CAP). Ten students received their high school diplomas this year, 9 of whom are moving on to college in the fall. These young



graduates of the College Access Program (CAP) at the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs

scholars join our 26 CAP alumni currently working on their degrees in the hope of joining the 38 CAP grads who earned college degrees in 2019.

### ◆ HOME Spun Loyalty Program

Regular shoppers at our HOME Spun Boutique can now take advantage of its new loyalty program. After providing their email address at checkout customers will accrue one point with every dollar spent and 50 points will earn them a 20 percent discount on their next in-store purchase.

### Seeking Book Donations

Our Social Enterprise program is still seeking donations of gently used books in good condition for our upcoming online book store. Please oring your gently used books (sorry, no encyclopedias, very old text books, or periodicals) to HOME Spun Boutique at 1523 Fairmount Avenue between 11 am – 7 pm, Monday through Friday. You can also email nicwatson@projecthome.org or call 215-309-5240.

## Young Adults and PECO

Our congratulations to the 10 young adult residents who recently completed the PECO Young Adult Employment and Training Program, which provides job skills training and paid internships to formerly homeless young adults. Through this initiative, these young adults have access to paid work experiences. Our thanks to PECO for their continued support of this important program.

nner Power Celebrates the 4th We were excited to learn that members of Project HOME's Inner Power Records performed at July's Wawa from PECO's Young Adult Employment and Welcome America Festival on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, marking their second performance in as many

years at Philadelphia's premiere music festival. Inner Power Records is a student-run record label at the Honickman Learning Center and Comcast Technology Labs that teaches students how to produce and

The first group of young adults to graduate

market their own music

# Saving Yourself Starts with Welcoming MAT

seven months when I was coming here and struggling," Lisa says, "God signs of the disease that they're asking us to help them with." That knows what would have happened to me because I would have probably is what Lisa feels when she shows up for "group" each week. "The been put off the program." DeBates says at SKWC they use slips and people that work here, they're special people. They're not here for a relapses as an indicator that they need to increase engagement, because job, it's a life calling, because to work with people like us, we can be connection is essential to recovery. "Trauma and addiction are really difficult, we can be hard to love, and it's hard to watch people come pretty fundamentally about disconnection, and the more that we can in that you care for, hurting themselves. I know that it's hard for help people build and rebuild connection, I think that's what's most them to watch us, but they saved my life." helpful and most healing."



Pathways to Housing (a Housing First provider) which partners with Project HOME Healthcare Services.

Thanks to the treatment, her support group and her hard work, Lisa now has a job, her driver's license, and the longest period of being clean in her life. Her son stays with her when he's not at boarding school, where Lisa put him for his own safety. She is trying to put her life back together, one small piece at a time and one day at a time. "I have to work on looking in the mirror and looking myself in the eye and aying, 'I forgive you; I like you; it's okay to be

Including Lisa's success story, Dr. Weinstein says the program and its philosophy are working. For at least the first three months, about 80% of the one hundred-plus participants in the MAT program stay in the program - a high rate for this kind of Dr. Weinstein was one of the first providers of MAT at treatment. "We're trying to meet people where Project HOME when it began in 2016 they are, we don't judge them for showing

## Voices of Healing

hese testimonies come from participants in Project HOME's MAT program.

> "I've mostly avoided my parents for the last twenty problem. This year we spent time together twice.'

"A year ago, I wouldn't have even been paying attention to my kid's school, let alone even know when her parent-teacher conference was. This year I got to go and hear so many good things about how she's doing ... I'm proud of both of us."

"It's taken me several months to give up that last bag. I'm so glad you all [SKWC] don't kick people out but keep working with them. Some of us need to feel more cared about than we can get other places."

"This was the first Christmas in five years I've been able to have my kids for Christmas Eve and wake up with them on Christmas day ... and not have to rush out to buy a bag."

In our encounter with the panhandler, we are all drawn if you encounter a person experiencing homelessness and told that our worth as persons depends on having into a vast social wound of suffering, helplessness, failure, and dehumanization. Easy answers elude us. Something (OCC) at 215-232-1984. The OCC can dispatch a drug bombarded with literally thousands of messages each of our common humanity is at stake.

From the Archives: "A Community of Recovery"

addiction. Despite lingering perceptions of addiction as a moral flaw, it is in fact a vicious disease, one with complex personal and social repercussions. The answer to addiction is recovery – the hard, painful, but hopeful work of healing of body, mind, and soul. Recovery – including treatment programs, 12-step groups, and supportive community – is a life-long journey, a radical reorientation of the self that begins by breaking from alcohol or drugs

If we want to assist those who suffer from homelessness and addiction, we must assure that the resources for recovery are available and accessible. We must advocate for programs and services that can make a real difference. We must also risk entering relationships with addicted persons – but in ways that do not enable them to continue Being a community of recovery is only possible when

and continues into ongoing healing of deep psychic

wounds that originally fostered the addictive craving.

In most cases, beneath the surface of panhandling is

addiction, to contact our Outreach Coordination Center enough money, power, status, success, or beauty. We are and alcohol team to work with the person on pursuing day designed to make us feel inadequate, and to evoke

But we must do more than refrain from giving money to an addicted panhandler. We must also become a community that commits to a spirit of recovery, offering

"We must also become a community that commits to a spirit of recovery, offering support to those on that journey with our hearts as well as our resources."

a support to those on that journey with our hearts as well as our resources. Rather than sending messages of blame that further stigmatize and dehumanize addicted persons, we must send messages of affirmation and healing.

denial and confront the addiction. We urge our friends, materialism and consumerism, we are constantly being common humanity.

in us cravings and desires. All of us are constantly being seduced by false values that diminish our humanity and

(continued from page 1)

The panhandler is not some ominous "other," who intrudes on our ordinary, daily lives. He symbolizes a brokenness we all ultimately share, a sickness in our culture, and a failure of our society to foster wholeness and sanity. He invites us all to rediscover healthy selves and healthy community.

We all need recovery – in many cases for substance abuse, mental illness, homelessness, and poverty. We also need – whatever our social situation - recovery of hope, dignity, and wholeness. We need to recover from our culture's rampant individualism and toward a renewed ethic of self-love that finds its fulfillment in love to others. All of us, in some part of our spirit, have our hand out, begging for a genuine experience of community and mutual care.

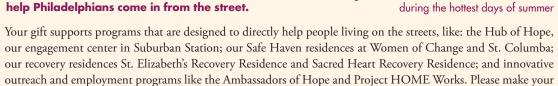
in self-destructive behaviors. It is crucial that we foster we grasp that ultimately, we all need recovery. Addiction Let us take each other's hand. Let us embark together on honesty, even lovingly urging an addict to break out of is not limited to drugs and alcohol. In this culture of a journey of recovery. What we have to discover is our

# **Extreme Heat K**

As temperatures rise across the city, unsheltered Philadelphians are most at risk. Extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the United States.

In cities like Philadelphia, trapped heat increases daytime temperatures and prevents nighttime cooling, posing significant risks to anyone experiencing street homelessness

Help save someone from this life-threatening heat by supporting Project HOME programs that help Philadelphians come in from the street.



### We don't want to leave even one person out in the heat. Your generosity and compassion can save a life.

donation in the enclosed envelope or online at www.projecthome.org/newsletter

f you encounter someone experiencing homelessness in need, please call the Philadelphia Homeless Outreach Hotline at 215-232-1984 Our thanks to the City of Philadelphia, SEPTA, and the Center City District for their leadership and continued support.

### Information That Matters to You

Project HOME Outreach Response Worker, Sam

ceive the news and issues nat matter to you by subscribing

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