




**OPEN HOUSE
MINISTRIES**

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Love

John 3:16

Connections

February, 2018



Freed From Secrets

You Gave Vanessa New Hope



Vanessa quietly enters the room and immediately wins you over with her soft smile, warm eyes and gentle demeanor. Even when surrounded by her three active daughters, a 5 year old and 3 year old twins, she remains calm and centered. You would not guess that five years ago her life was chaotic and confused, cloaked behind layers of denial.

She recounts it began shortly after her mother passed away. Vanessa was 19 years old, and her heart was empty. She gave up on God. Darkness clouded life, including a rocky relationship with her boyfriend. They were in and out of drugs, no plans for the future, just going with the flow. Then she became pregnant. She knew she had to be more responsible and would stay clean for a spell and then relapse. "It was such a dark, lonely, empty place," she says, as she shakes her head gently.

Two years later, Vanessa became pregnant with twins. She stayed away from drugs through most of the pregnancy, then relapsed one week before their birth. "By the grace of God, the babies were ok," she shares. But

life quickly hit a downward spiral. Domestic fighting, drugs, chaos, job loss, and the final blow, loss of the apartment.

Vanessa's family took her and the girls in for a spell then in 2014, she and the girls were accepted at Open House. She will tell you at that time, she knew in her mind it was the right thing to be doing, but in her heart, "I took my eyes off God and onto the kids' dad. I was angry and I wanted him with me." When he was released from jail, Vanessa moved back out of the shelter and into an apartment with him. What followed next was month after month of hiding from the truth.

"Every day, Vanessa prayed for the strength to overcome her addiction."

Secrets were Vanessa's survival. Secretly she took her eyes off God. Secretly she was angry that the girls' dad was in jail and not with her. Secretly she wanted him to slip back into drugs so she would have an excuse to



go back to them too. She admits today she held the secret from her family and did drugs behind their back. Once out of the shelter, she wouldn't return her case manager's calls. Her case manager even came to her apartment to try to reach her and

(Continued on page 2)



A Most Unusual Thing

Chaplain's Corner - February, 2018

On Friday mornings at Open House, we have a required class called "Open Forum." We gather to talk together openly, with no preset agenda. We always pray for one another, and we keep a spiritual tenor in our discussions. But this is a process class, often talking about hard issues, while growing our inter-relationships along the way.

We span a wide world of topics: from politics, to global threats, to personal gains (e.g. kids coming home) and unexpected losses. We share stories of our lives before Jesus, and His growing presence in our lives today. The only rule for any class is that we show mutual respect - by listening to others and validating the person - even if we disagree.

Like kindling in a fireplace, so politics is a great discussion starter! It is amazing to see the great span of opinions, as residents articulate their thoughts and deeply held beliefs. We explore what the Bible says on each topic. Part of growing together is learning to hear contrasting opinions without having to disparage the messenger. Along

the way, the residents inevitably decide if Open House is a safe place to express one's true self.

If discussions were to devolve into winning an argument - we would instantly have "winners and losers" and the discussion would instantly cease. But if we can process together, in an air of mutual respect, and built upon the foundation of GOD's Word, we can continue learning and growing together. Weeks ago, one woman stated that she was afraid that a discussion of homosexuality would devolve into angry division - instead there was heartfelt discussion of a moral issue. Over the years, Open Forum has explored most contentious issues, including sexuality, immigration, abortion and suicide - and though daunting, it is refreshing to see how His love grows us together.

Oswald Chambers once said, "What we call the process, GOD calls the end." I believe that this indeed is the Jesus Way - loving and respecting others on the Journey of Life.

Traveling Together,
Mark Roskam, Chaplain

Freed From Secrets (*Vanessa's Story - continued from page 1*)

Vanessa hid behind the curtains. Literally. But the secrets only made the emptiness worse. Then one day, she could hide no more. In early 2017, Vanessa admitted to her case manager (who she knew she could trust) that her drug addiction was out of control and asked for help.

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***"Today you can see peace and joy in Vanessa. This month she is nine months clean and sober. 'God healed me from that bondage.'"***  
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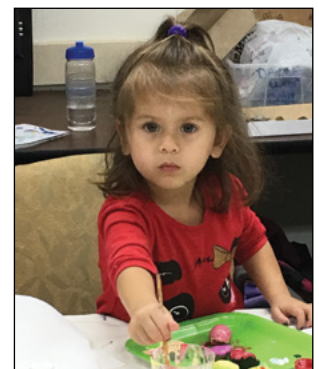
Vanessa's return to Open House was conditional upon one thing: rehab. You can see big tears well up when she explains how hard that was only because she could only take two of her children. Her family once again stepped up and took in one of the twins and for the next 120 days, Vanessa was in treatment.

This time was different. Every day, Vanessa prayed for the strength to overcome her addiction. Daily she read her bible,

inspiring other women there. She faithfully checked in with the Open House case managers each week. She was often reminded of the value of Open House for her daughters. They constantly asked when they were "going back home to Open House". Vanessa completed rehab in September 2017, and reunited with her other daughter, was welcomed back to the Open House shelter.

Today you can see peace and joy in Vanessa. This month she is nine months clean and sober. "God healed me from that bondage." And she has hope for the future. Her daughters are in school, and they are excited that they have recently been given a scholarship to take ballet classes. She wants to continue her education and go back to school to get an Associate degree in education.

"This is the lifestyle I want for me and my children. So long as I keep my eyes on God and stay surrounded by people supporting me in this journey, I will get through all the hard times."



When They Are in Your Care - Part II

By Vikkilyn Rolfs, Director of Day Care



Last month we introduced how studies have linked the impact of “Adverse Childhood Experiences” (ACEs) and childhood trauma to mental and physical health conditions as an adult. The Center for Youth Wellness sites that ACE’s put children at higher risk for psychological, developmental, and physiological problems later in life. It literally “gets under their skin”. Science has proven that toxic stress can change the child’s hormonal and immune systems and even DNA activity. It can lead to learning difficulties, behavior issues and even chronic disease. And intervention at the earliest stages is key. *

For Vikkilyn Rolf, Director of Day Care at Open House Ministries, it is apparent that many children in her care are the innocents of ACE’s, demonstrating and playing out behaviors from having lived amidst drugs, abuse, traumas and homelessness.



Vikkilyn relates, “It starts in our infant room. It may seem odd that it starts here but it does. We have had babies that seem so disconnected and scared. We hold, cuddle and play. We introduce them to things to feel the different textures and colors and sounds. Sensory, sensory, sensory! We make sure they have

their tummies full of meals and snack time. All of this is so important.”

In the last two years, case managers and staff have seen an increasing number of adults dealing with methamphetamine addiction. Vikkilyn continues, “Even if a mother stopped using meth when she was pregnant but resumes after the child is born, the child is at high risk. Why? Because the meth in the parent’s system transfers dermally – with skin to skin contact – from parent to child. Or, if there are adults smoking it in the same room where the child crawls,

the infant picks up the residue that has settled in the floor or carpeting. It gets right into their system.”

She adds, “We are always learning how to best help these kiddos, one at a time. Staff from the Children’s Center recently gave us a class about the residual effects of meth on children. We had an infant who used to scream all day. (We did everything short of standing on our heads to calm him down!) She brought some sensory items, and a “Heavy Helper” stuffed animal that was filled with 5 lbs. of beans. He had been sitting on what we thought was a cute little patterned mat. But even the pattern was too much stimulation for him. As soon as she turned the mat over to the plain blue side, he stopped crying! Then she cuddled him with the weighted stuffed animal, using the beans to stimulate his feet and hands. Small, small changes, day and night difference.”

For Vikkilyn, it boils down to this: “We believe in giving every child the personal care they need and at the same time support the whole family in becoming healthy in their program.”

Next month, in Part III of the series, we will look at how ACE’s and their adverse effects are an intergenerational problem, and what it takes to break the chain of transferring ACE’s from generation to generation.



*Source: Center for Youth Wellness, www.centerforyouthwellness.org, 2018.

*The Open House Ministries Board Of Directors
cordially invites you to*



Thursday, May 10, 2018 • 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.
Warehouse 23, 100 Columbia Street #102, • Vancouver, WA 98660

A fundraising event to benefit families at Open House Ministries



Early Bird Tickets available NOW online at www.sheltered.org

Please Nominate Us!



*Thank you for your support in 2017!
Please remember Open House Ministries and our
Retail Shops on 13th when you are nominating this month:*

Open House Ministries..... Category: Best Non-Profit

Wheel Deals Bicycles..... Category: Best Bike Store/Bicycle Shop

Second Hand Solutions Thrift Store Category: Best Thrift Store

Nominations are open February 12-26, 2018 online at www.bestofclarkcounty.com.

**CURRENT
SHELTER NEEDS:**

Baby food
Diapers, size 4, 5,6
Dish soap
Small size laundry detergent

**Student Internship and/or
Volunteer Opportunities**

Do you have graphic design experience with Adobe InDesign? Love social media? Want to expand your copy writing skills? Our Creative Marketing team needs you! We have lots of innovative projects this year and welcome your talent! Fast pace, flexible hours, and fun. Contact our Volunteer Coordinator Claudia Merritt at (360)737-0300 or claudia@sheltered.org for more information.