



OPEN HOUSE  
MINISTRIES

[www.sheltered.org](http://www.sheltered.org)

P.O. Box 242  
Vancouver, WA 98666  
(360) 737-0300

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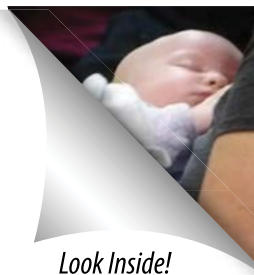
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# Connections

January, 2018



Look Inside!

## *A Father's Love For His Son*

By Mark Roskam, Chaplain



When speaking with groups of people about Open House Ministries, I usually refer to "our families" as a much larger group than the present thirty-five families in Shelter. Beyond these current residents, we also have nearly twenty families in transitional housing and literally hundreds of alumni families. The span of the influence of Open House is tremendous. But today, let me introduce you to a family that is close to the heart of our ministry: a very special and gentle man and his son, a native of Mexico City today working endlessly to earn his citizenship in the United States.

Oscar Cuellar is known for his warm smile, great bear hugs, his genuine handshake, his love for Jesus and his love for his six-year-old son Oscar Jr. (O.J.). I remember meeting him initially after he became the primary caregiver of his toddler son. Before coming to Open House, Oscar's life was dark and different, and if you ask him to go back in time, his face clouds over and his voice grows somber, recalling what it was like such a long time ago.

Darkness. Danger. Drugs. Dealing. Depression. Despondence. Oscar knew he was dying a slow death, nearing the end of the lonely and dark road of rebellion and his addiction to drugs. He reflects that he got so low that he pleaded with God to stop it all, to allow his life to "hit the wall" and just end it, once and for all. And if GOD would not end it, Oscar would end it himself. Instead, he ended up in jail. It was there, faced with who he had become, that he hit bottom and surrendered to God. In the darkness of his cell, he saw a Great Light and he knew in his heart that life would never be the same.

After his release from jail, he became a proud father to his son, Oscar (O.J.). But while his newborn child was his life's deepest joy, the boy's mother struggled and dove deeper into addiction. When the child was just two years old, O.J.'s birth mother left, and Oscar

***"Clean and sober, working hard Monday through Friday, and now raising a son on his own, Oscar was resolved to find a way to stay the course."***

became a single parent. Clean and sober, working hard Monday through Friday, and now raising a son on his own, Oscar was resolved to find a way to stay the course. But he was struggling to make it. In 2014, he and O.J. came to Open House. Oscar embraced the program, was particularly blessed by friend

(Continued on page 2)



# *An Infusion of Hope*

## **Chaplain's Corner - January, 2018**

Have you heard of “infusion”? I was acquainted with the term at Starbucks with their new line of “infused” beverages. Much more importantly, at Christmas we celebrate the infusion of hope into our world. Prior to Jesus, the trajectory of humanity was downward; heading towards suffering, hopelessness and ultimately death. But with the life of Jesus, He not only intercepted that downward free fall of humanity, and He ultimately altered the trajectory of our lives towards “Life - with an infusion of **Hope!**”

My favorite opportunity at Open House is sitting down for a candid conversation with every resident family. I simply say, “Tell me your story.” My heart engages as I hear the tale of degradation, each so personal and unique. I always ask about religious activities and spiritual values in their younger years. As I hear the stories of the unraveling of lives and families, and even seeming godlessness, my eyes still sparkle in Hope. I know

that Jesus continues today to break the tale spin of despondence and infuse Hope. “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit” (Ps.34:18).

As 2018 begins, we can so easily cower at our own struggles or the news headlines; but join me in the Hope of a life deeper and greater than our situation in life. Thank you for heartening us through your faithful support of our life ministry at Open House. We are strengthened by your loving care, prayers and steadfastness in supporting our mission. Your efforts and myriad kindnesses buoy us through the challenges along the way.

With Love and Fond Affection,

*Mark Roskam, Chaplain*



### **A Father's Love For His Son (*Oscar's Story - continued from page 1*)**

ships, Bible courses, the Bike Shop and discussions of the Holy Land. After one year in Shelter, the Cuellars qualified for a transitional housing apartment through Open House Ministries.

He will tell you that single parenting is the hardest thing he has ever done. Though he is the consummate “Papa Bear”, his tender heart sees past the struggles and he remains

***“Oscar is raising O.J. to know  
God and His Son, Jesus.”***

passionate about the need to put his son's needs ahead of his own needs. Oscar is raising O.J. to know God and His Son, Jesus. Every day O.J.'s simple prayer is for a mommy. And every day Oscar looks to the heavens and asks, “What do you want of me, God?” Oscar and O.J. must depend on each other. Oscar works full-time as a landscaper while O.J. attends preschool. Oscar is a man who counts his blessings and is quick and ready to say, “Thank you!” Today Oscar

and O.J. thank you for the opportunity you gave them to get a fresh start at Open House Ministries.

What's ahead? Oscar will proudly tell you that he is continuing his steady pursuit of becoming a U.S. citizen, his long-time and costly dream. He admits it is not easy and there is a lot of waiting, but he is determined to do it for himself and his son. He has hopes of getting married. And once again, his eyes sparkle, and his smile returns, and he shares his final hope - to one-day visit Israel. Until then, every day, thanks to you this father and son are both loving God, surrounded with their friends and are hard-working, contributing members of our community and our country.







# *When They Are in Your Care - Part I*

*By Vikkilyn Rolfs, Director of Day Care*

You may have wondered how homelessness affects children. I can tell you first hand, they are the innocent and helpless victims. They should be enjoying childhood and security without being hungry, cold or scared. They should not have to endure living in tents or cars or from one couch to another. Unfortunately, all too many of our kiddos in the shelter have experienced more in their short years than most people have in a lifetime.

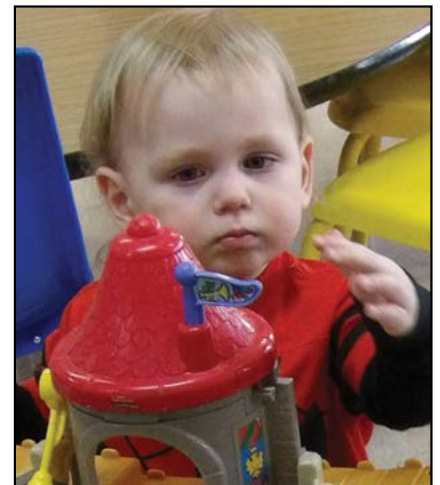
Recent studies have linked the effects of "Adverse Childhood Experiences" (ACEs) and childhood trauma to the mental and physical health as an adult. These would be situations like emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional and physical neglect. Witnessing domestic violence, substance abuse, household mental illness, parental separation or divorce, incarcerated family member is so hard on a child. Bullying by another child or an adult, witnessing violence or a sibling being abused, any form of discrimination, and being homeless are each considered ACEs. Frequent or prolonged exposure to any combination of ACEs create stresses on the child's developing brain negatively impacting

their health now, later in school and as an adult. Children who have experienced ACEs are more likely to have liver disease, heart disease, adolescent pregnancy, substance abuse, depression, and suicide attempts.

In my nearly 13 years at Open House and 11 years as the Director of Day Care, I have seen children who are spending so much time just trying to survive and process life each day that it takes away the time they should be learning and experiencing all of God's wonderful world. We try to help these deeply affected children feel secure and loved but also expose them to the beauty around us, one child at a

time. Our goal is to make every single day filled with fun, positive, enriching and age appropriate safe experiences. We have learned that while you cannot change that the ACEs happened, with time you can help change the impact that it will have on the child going forward.

*Look for Part II of this series in next month's newsletter when you will find the story of how ACEs impact behaviors in the youngest of our children and how the Open House Day Care Center is helping kids with histories of family addictions and homelessness.*



## *Is a "Donor Advised Fund" for You?*

*From time to time friends of Open House have asked us about setting up a "special fund" to benefit Open House Ministries. In the last several years Donor Advised Funds have become a popular choice for current and planned gifts. At the recommendation of several local experts, we turned to one of our valued community partners, the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington to find out more. Their team provided the following information, which may be of interest to you.*

Donor Advised Funds are one potential giving vehicle at the Community Foundation. They are an excellent alternative to a private foundation. They offer charitably inclined individuals better tax benefits, lower operating costs and less paperwork than a private foundation.

Flexible and tailored to your needs, a Donor Advised Fund allows you to:

- Make contributions at any time
- Receive an immediate tax deduction at the time of the gift
- Potentially grow the fund's principle through investment returns
- Grant on a schedule that works for you and your family

A Donor Advised Fund can be opened with commercial providers, educational institutions and independent public charities, such as the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington. The Foundation pools charitable funds for investment purposes, provides a diversified portfolio and distributes grants to the nonprofits you recommend.

Is a Donor Advised Fund for you? Contact your tax advisor or the Community Foundation for Southwest Washington at (360) 952-4313. If you are interested in discussing other charitable vehicles to support Open House Ministries, please call or email our Development Office at (360) 356-3770 or email [judym@sheltered.org](mailto:judym@sheltered.org).

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## Something *New* This Spring!

BUILDING

Charitable Luncheon

*hope*

*New* **Date:** Thursday, May 10, 2018

*New* **Time:** 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

*New* **Location:** Warehouse 23, 100 Columbia Street #102,  
Vancouver, WA 98660

Tickets will be available online February 1st at [sheltered.org](http://sheltered.org).

**P.S. You will want to be there!**

### CURRENT SHELTER NEEDS:

Meat

Baby food

Size 4,5,6 diapers

Small size laundry  
detergent

Small size dish soap



**OPEN HOUSE  
MINISTRIES**

*We're a family shelter*