




OPEN HOUSE MINISTRIES

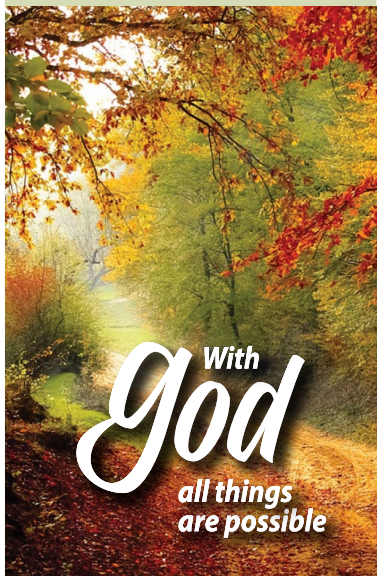
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SHELTER NEEDS:

Infant/newborn diapers,
laundry soap, dish soap,
razors, and adult
toothbrushes.

Connections

September, 2018



Look Inside!

You Showed Her the Light and She is Carrying the Torch

On August 5th, Mahayla ran in the Race for the Homeless, put on each year by New Heights Church benefitting Open House Ministries. It was the first race she had ever entered. She is a college student who, two years ago started running as part of her exercise routine. She soon found it was better than she imagined, one of many positive changes she has made in her life. She loves running daily for the exercise and the positive benefits of reducing anxiety and depression. She grins, "I had a goal to enter a race, and when I heard about this one, and who it benefited, I knew it was a perfect fit for my first race!" A perfect fit indeed, because Mahayla knows firsthand what it is like to have been a child living at Open House Ministries.

Mahayla recalls that when she was "somewhere between first and second grade," she, her mother and brother had to leave Virginia. "The home situation there was not good", she recalls. When they came to Washington, they had no home, moving from place to place. The family attended City Harvest Church where the Pastor introduced them to Open House. At her young age, she recalls the highlight of her week: Thursday evening Good News Bible Club, conducted weekly by "A sweet, loving couple. We played games, sang and learned the Bible from them. I so looked forward to that every single week!"

When she was in third grade, her parents reunited, and the three moved out and had a real home at last. But that was short lived, and by the

time she was eleven, Mahayla, her brother and mother were back to Open House. This time, things were different. As a preteen, Mahayla became aware that they did not live like other kids did. She remembers the stigma that went with being identified as homeless. And she grew more and more withdrawn, kept very private and avoided hanging out with school friends. She felt a deep sense of separation. It was a hard time, grey with painful isolation.

After school, she attended the youth group at the shelter that met in the upstairs of the Annex building. It was an emotionally safe place to be with other teens and preteens from the shelter and transitional housing where they could get help with homework, read books and have activities together. By the



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***"Without Open House, I don't know where I would be today."***  
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time the family graduated to transitional housing, Mahayla and her family had received the counseling and support to make significant changes. She will tell you, "I learned there is no shame in my past, it is not something I could control. Instead, I just want you to know how much you helped me." She quietly reflects, "Without Open House, I don't know where I would be today."

After completing high school, Mahayla enrolled in Clark College, and soon will be receiving her Associate Transfer Degree. She works two jobs while attending school, one of them at the Van Mall Retirement Center. She also works in the Career

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Chaplain's Corner

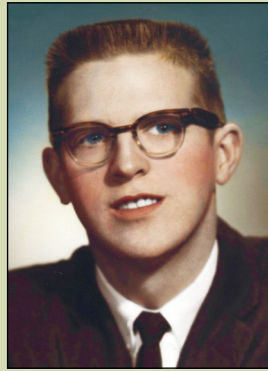
September, 2018 - Pastor Aaron Knapp

It was just under four years ago when this 72-year old chaplain picked up his laptop and headed toward the exit door, completing more than thirteen years of chaplaincy and 35 years of pastoral ministry. Saying goodbye and closing the office door for the last time was a very emotional experience.

I recall the steps of my life as Chaplain at Open House; beginning with a few classes, men's group, counseling sessions and staff meetings. In the early days, I identified "advocacy" as a need for both residents and staff. I began advocating in the court at C.P.S. family meetings, OHM staff meetings, jail visits, etc., attempting to build trust, give dignity and create hope. Doing things to create and sustain healthy relationships in the House was a significant means to begin to encourage personal faith in God and hope for a restored life.

I researched resources that directly related to resident needs and helped launch a plan to reach them. A loving caring staff that supported residents at every level was the strongest part of our ministry and succeeded in giving what program in-and-of-itself could not do. Motivated by the love of God—the ministry keeps giving Life!

Since my early days, the "Retail Stores at 13th Street" have been added, helping residents gain work skills, provide services to our community, and financial resources to our



ministry. Just recently, by the grace of God and the generosity of our supporters and volunteers, we have just completed the Tod and Maxine McCloskey Family Resource Center, built debt-free, which will increase our services to the homeless community and to the folks in our neighborhood.

I am humbled to have been part of this dynamic ministry that has been the site of much healing, restoration, reconciliation of families to God, to family, and to the outside world.

- The grace of God
- The love of people
- Continuing to transform lives



As I move through the Vancouver community, I see and hear the greetings and smiles of people who have passed through Open House on their journey to a new life. I say, "Thank you, Lord." I am truly honored to be a partner in something so worthy of trust, that bears the mark of the hand of God and the generous effort of a lot of businesses, churches and individuals. I am a blessed man. God bless you. ONWARD!

With Love,

Pastor Aaron Knapp (retired)

You Showed Her the Light and She is Carrying the Torch (Continued from page 1)

Center at Clark, and really enjoys helping other students write their resumes. The fire you lit in Mahayla nearly a decade ago ignited a torch that she is carrying forward.

Her thank you is simple. "I just want people out there to know how important it is [for a homeless family] to have the support they need. Sure, maybe you could do it on your own, but you don't have to be alone. Open House gave us the support we needed."

Just recently Mahayla has come back to Open House as a volunteer and loves working in the Thrift Store. She hopes to attend Portland State University next fall (2019) and work towards her Bachelor of Social Work degree. Given her track record, Mahayla is a winner. She is living example of what happens when you touch a heart and ignite a young soul. We predict that in her own way,

in whatever she does, Mahayla will pick up the torch and carry it, shining light wherever she goes.



Mahayla, Claudia, and Katie at "Race For The Homeless."



When They Are In Your Care - You Get Them Ready For School

From the desk of Vikkilyn Rolfs, Director of Daycare



Remember how excited you felt when you got a new pair of school shoes, a new school jacket or new school supplies? At Open House, it is much the same. When you are entrusted with the care of youngsters, you work every day to make sure they have what they need to succeed in school. (At Open House, it is a requirement that school age children attend school.)

Each September, our children face the challenge and adjustment that all children do today: socially “fitting in.” Many have experienced the pain of feeling “less than” their peers in many ways, being labeled early when they look different.

Vikkilyn explains, “How these kids experience their first days back at school is so important. They really want to be like their peers, not stick out as ‘the homeless kid.’ At times in the past, they may not have had the school supplies, the school recommended gym shoes, or just a new set of clothes that don’t look like hand-me-downs. Particularly for our middle school and high school students, appearance is closely tied to their self-image. It shouldn’t be so, but we all know in today’s culture, that is just the way it is, and it is closely tied to the child’s self-esteem.”

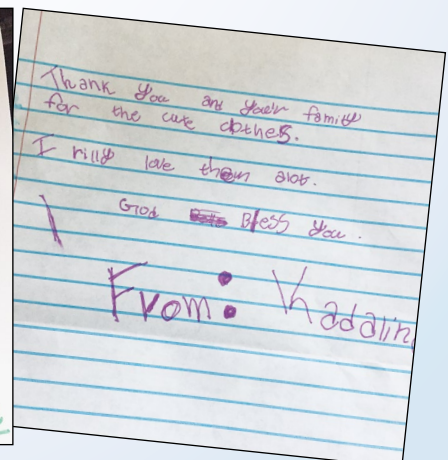
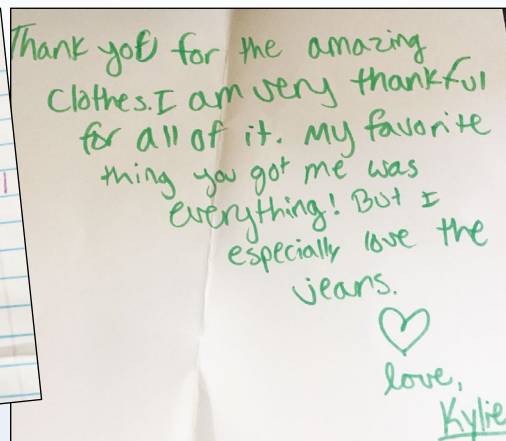
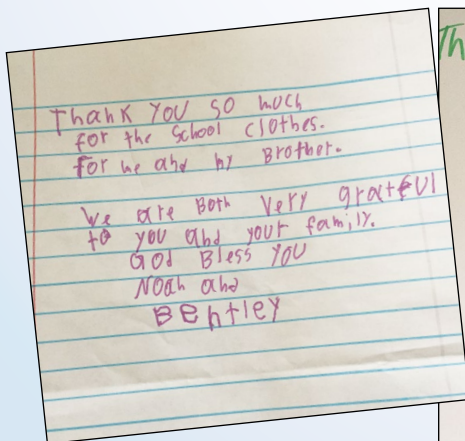
This summer, Vikkilyn mentioned to a few friends that she would like to have each child in the shelter program go



to school with new clothes. She called it “**Adopt a Child**” and provided ages and sizes specifically for each child and offered the option to support a child with a new school outfit. What resulted surpassed even Vikkilyn’s wildest dreams. Friends and acquaintances shopped for new shoes, shirts, pants and any other clothing that would bless the child. Within a few short weeks, eighty-eight children—ALL the children in the shelter and in transitional housing, and former residents who could use a little help—received gifts of new clothes, new backpacks and school supplies! Vikkilyn continues, “Word really got out. It melted my heart that friends from as far away as North Carolina, Colorado, Texas and California sent money to cover the cost of clothing for a child.” The **HOPE After School Program** and others in the community provided backpacks and school supplies.

“I am just blown away,” says Vikkilyn. “I cannot thank you all enough. God has been so good to us by opening so many hearts. You can tell by the looks on the kids’ faces how much the new clothes mean to them. The letters they wrote say it all: THANK YOU so much!”

If you would like to be on next year’s list for “Adopt a Child” for back to school clothes, please email our Daycare Director Vikkilyn Rolfs at Vikkilyn@sheltered.org.





**OPEN HOUSE
MINISTRIES**
We're a family shelter



Keep Us Safe.

On 9/20/18, please
remember the children of
OPEN HOUSE MINISTRIES.
Your support gives them safe shelter.

*September 20, 2018
is Give More 24!, Southwest
Washington's day of giving.*

**GIVE
MORE 24!**

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

EVERY \$24 KEEPS A CHILD SAFE FOR 24 MORE HOURS.

How You Can Get Involved

1. Donate anytime at www.sheltered.org.
2. **Give More 24! begins at 12:00am on 9/20/18.**
3. Make an on-line donation of \$10 or more anytime that day at www.sheltered.org. **Every \$24 keeps a child safe for 24 more hours at Open House.**



OPEN HOUSE MINISTRIES
Restoring lives, one family at a time.

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