

Housing Matters

From the Executive Director



Volume 19, Issue 1
Spring 2017

THANK YOU!

Because of YOU great things are happening.

Without you, there would be no Earl's Place. There would be no Prospect Place. Whether you know us well or you are just learning about us, whether you have been a long time supporter or you are a new friend, thank you for reading this newsletter. Thank you for caring.

Because of you...

- Derrick went from unemployable to employed.
- Edward earned his GED and better employment
- Ronald got a better job and started classes to obtain his commercial driver's license.
- All three men moved to permanent housing in January.

Because of you...

More than 300 men have found a safe haven at Earl's Place and Prospect Place. Recently, Charles F., Bruce, Ronnie, Gene, and Charles N., were able to address healthcare needs without the worries of where they would recover.

The men at Prospect Place also continue to enjoy the stability their housing provides. Two of the residents there, William and Steven, have obtained employment.

So thank you, Dear Reader, for these opportunities. Thank you for your compassion. Thank you for helping change lives!

Earl's Place
1400 E. Lombard St.
Baltimore, MD 21231

Prospect Place
8720 Philadelphia Road
Baltimore, MD 21237

United Ministries is a housing & social justice organization dedicated to assisting homeless men who want to change their lives & to changing community attitudes toward the homeless.

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Board Member Spotlight

Jennifer Knighton

Jennifer joined the Board of United Ministries in 2014. She is the pastor of Grace United Church of Christ in Catonsville, a staunch supporter of United Ministries, and an ice skater.



How did you first hear about United Ministries?

I have Rev. Roy Joellenbeck to thank for introducing me to Earl's Place. At a clergy meeting, he chatted with me about this wonderful opportunity to make a real difference. He was so right!

What attracted you to the organization? What motivated you to help out?

What attracted me was hearing the men's stories. The prospect of learning more about homelessness and doing even a small thing to make a difference drew me to join the board. It has been more than sitting at a Board meeting, United Ministries engages people to work together. That is important to me.

Why is United Ministries' mission to help men experiencing homelessness important to you?

Homelessness and addiction touches people across all ages, race, economic and social status, and educational background. We could all so quickly find ourselves in need of help. There but for the grace of God go I, to use an old phrase. It touches my heart because all people deserve a chance...some need more than one! It is a matter of caring for others and UM gives me that opportunity hands on!

How do you feel you've contributed to United Ministries? What do you feel you've gotten out of being on the board? Are there goals you hope to attain before you leave the board?

I hope I have brought to the board my commitment, my energy, time and my desire for helping others. Also the joy of sharing the mission and rallying others to understand the importance of working against homelessness.

I feel like I have gained so much more than I have contributed. I have gained the perspective of what it means to struggle and the determination to keep working in a society that may be indifferent. The most important thing I have gained is that working

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together we can make a difference. All the board members bring a different perspective and abilities to the board. It has been a wonderful experience to work with a group that is so caring and dedicated and talented. I hope to see the success of a larger board before my term has ended and all the struggle and joy, that will bring.

How would you like to see United Ministries grow in the future?

The opening of Prospect Place was a great accomplishment by the executive Director, Sheila Helgerson and the board during my tenure. I would love to see a women's place with the same mission as Earl's Place in Baltimore City.

Being on the board of directors, you get a perspective on Earl's Place & Prospect Place that other people don't have. Were there any things that surprised you once you were on the board? Have there been any experiences that have struck you as particularly meaningful?

Until I rolled up my sleeves and became active, the depth of homelessness and the pain of homelessness eluded me. Once you are off drugs or alcohol, or both and are clean and sober, where do you go? Where do you go to find a place to live and be supported to stay clean? The stories of how the residents find their way to Earl's Place are overwhelming at times...but the courage and drive to stay clean and sober, to make a new life...those stories have brought tears to my eyes. It is the day to day struggles that say to me...and you thought you had a bad day.

Having dinner with the men and engaging their help on projects has given me the chance to listen and learn. Watching a new resident grow during his time at Earl's Place and seeing where he goes after is quite moving.

Why should someone consider serving on the board of United Ministries?

Serving on this board is making a difference in a tangible way. It helps develop priorities and put life in perspective. When the men laugh and share at a gathering it is the best feeling in the world.

Once they were cold, once they were hungry, once they were high: now they are warm and working toward a life with a clear head. I look at them and I think, what we are doing here helps to make that happen. We bring success stories to life through the resources and work of Earl's Place and Prospect Place, that makes a difference in our own lives and in our community.

Would you like to serve along with Jennifer & change the lives of men experiencing homelessness? Please contact Executive Director, Sheila Helgerson, at sheila@umhousing.org or 410-522-0225 for board service and other opportunities.

Resolution Run 2017



Team Grace



Team First & St. Stephen's

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As the calendar turned to 2017, we spent New Year's day with over 600 people who ran, walked or volunteered in the Resolution Run! We know resolutions are hard to keep, but we resolve to continue to provide housing and reduce the magnitude of homelessness!

Congratulations to the top male and female runners:

Josh McHaffey	1st place	18:40.8
Robbie Genzel	2nd place	18:50.9
Connor Martin	3rd place	18:56.7

Brit Lang	1st place	19:23.1
Lauren Lake	2nd place	22:20.2
Jessica Mascari	3rd place	22:52.2

AND to the largest team...

Upper Fell's Point Improvement Association!



Photo Credit: Gary Landsman



Last year we had the pleasure of meeting Jennifer and her daughter, Rory, two incredible people who, well I will let Jennifer tell you....

"For years, I have been involved with an amazing nonprofit, Facing Homelessness, and their tagline is Just Say Hello. I have always felt like this is so powerful. So many people we meet who are homeless feel invisible: unseen, ignored, outcast. What if we all just said hello and started to see the beauty in each person, beyond their homelessness? What if I took this message on the road? The Just Say Hello Tour was born. I can't say exactly where it came from, because honestly in many ways it felt as if the idea visited me and would not let go. I simply said yes to it."

Jennifer and Rory spent an afternoon visiting with us and what followed was a series of stories about some of the residents and staff of Earl's Place.

Ron is one of the men Jennifer highlighted. His story, Distorted Reality, follows.

Ronald is working hard to get his feet under him, living at Earl's Place and rebuilding his life. He told me about bouts of homelessness... sometimes it would be a breakup with a girlfriend, sometimes drugs, though in the end it would always lead back to the drugs. "They just rob you," he told me, shaking his head and echoing a sentiment that I heard from almost every man I talked to there, that it seemed like he was an entirely different person when he was... using, a person he didn't know or recognize. "It's a distortion of you, they distort everything," he said, talking about the times he was using. Now, he's glad to be clean again. It's giving him a chance to stabilize, erase that distortion, and get back to the person he truly is.

So often as a society we judge those who are addicted and using substances, whether it's drugs or alcohol, but let me tell you something... Most of the time, they are judging themselves harsher than we can ever judge them. They are shaming themselves, wondering how they came to a place of such intense distortion that they don't recognize themselves anymore. Nobody in that position needs anyone else to heap judgment and shame onto them. Empathy is always the path, and can heal us all.

You can find more about Jennifer, Rory and the tour at www.justsayhellotour.com/homepage-1/

Heart and Soul

Jennifer: Just Say Hello Tour interview



Marlee is a student at Goucher College in Baltimore. She started volunteering four years ago at Earl's Place. She is one of the sweetest young women I have ever met, so open and full of love and hope, but don't be mistaken, she is a spitfire, determined and energetic, engaged and persuasive. She is someone who strikes me as a person who gets what they want, and in fact, that's exactly how I ended up at Earl's Place to begin with. Originally, we didn't have any plans to go to Baltimore, but

when Marlee found us online and emailed us, begging us to visit, I couldn't possibly say no.

I get the feeling that I'm not the only one Marlee has had this influence on. What was originally supposed to just be a term commitment for a semester has turned into a several year multi-layer project for both Marlee and Goucher, who she has convinced every step of the way to approve new programs, and partnerships. She's created an art program at Earl's Place with students from the school, which was showcased in an exhibit on school grounds. There is now a garden for residents to work in and enjoy. And of course, years after her visit ended, Marlee is still there, helping to run the program and sending smiles and hellos to the residents, who all seem to light up when they see her.

In Marlee, each of the men seem to see someone they once knew... a daughter, a friend, or a sister, and she's noticed too how it's often surprising how much she can relate to the men in the program, even though she is usually much younger than them, and from a completely different background. Once you get to know someone, there is always a connection, a way to get on even ground, even when it seems as if you'd have nothing in common, and Marlee looks for that connection in each resident to help form a solid bond with them.

It's not a one way street; she gets just as much out of these relationships as they do, she says. She has learned so much from the men, about the work she wants to do, about herself, and about some misconceptions she had before she started coming to Earl's Place. Marlee told me one of the biggest things she has learned, which is so simple but so profound: Men need help, too. She said she always planned to work with women and children, who are vulnerable and often the first ones we want to help, but like on the Titanic, the men are often left standing there, drowning. She said she wants to work on humanizing homelessness, but especially when it comes to men, who so often are victims of this idea we have as a society that part of being a man means taking care of yourself and never needing help. "Everyone has a story. It changes everything when you know it," she told me.

The programs Marlee has instituted all concentrate on helping the men to heal not just their bodies, but their hearts and their souls, with meaningful activities such as art and gardening. She reminded me that so often, people suffering from homelessness and addiction have so much more they are healing from than just those two things. Wise way beyond her years, this one. I cannot wait to see what kind of impact she has on the world; she's already doing so much GOOD.

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Thank you!

Your gift, no matter what size, will help change a man's life forever.

We are always pleased to speak to your congregation or organization. Call or e-mail Sheila at sheila@umhousing.org or (410) 522-0225 to schedule a time.

UPCOMING EVENTS

[Opening Doors Dinner & Auction](#)

Thursday, October 5th, 6-9:30 p.m.
Boumi Temple 5050 King Avenue

[Resolution Run 5K Run and Walk](#)

Monday, January 1, 2018, 2 p.m.
Patterson Park