

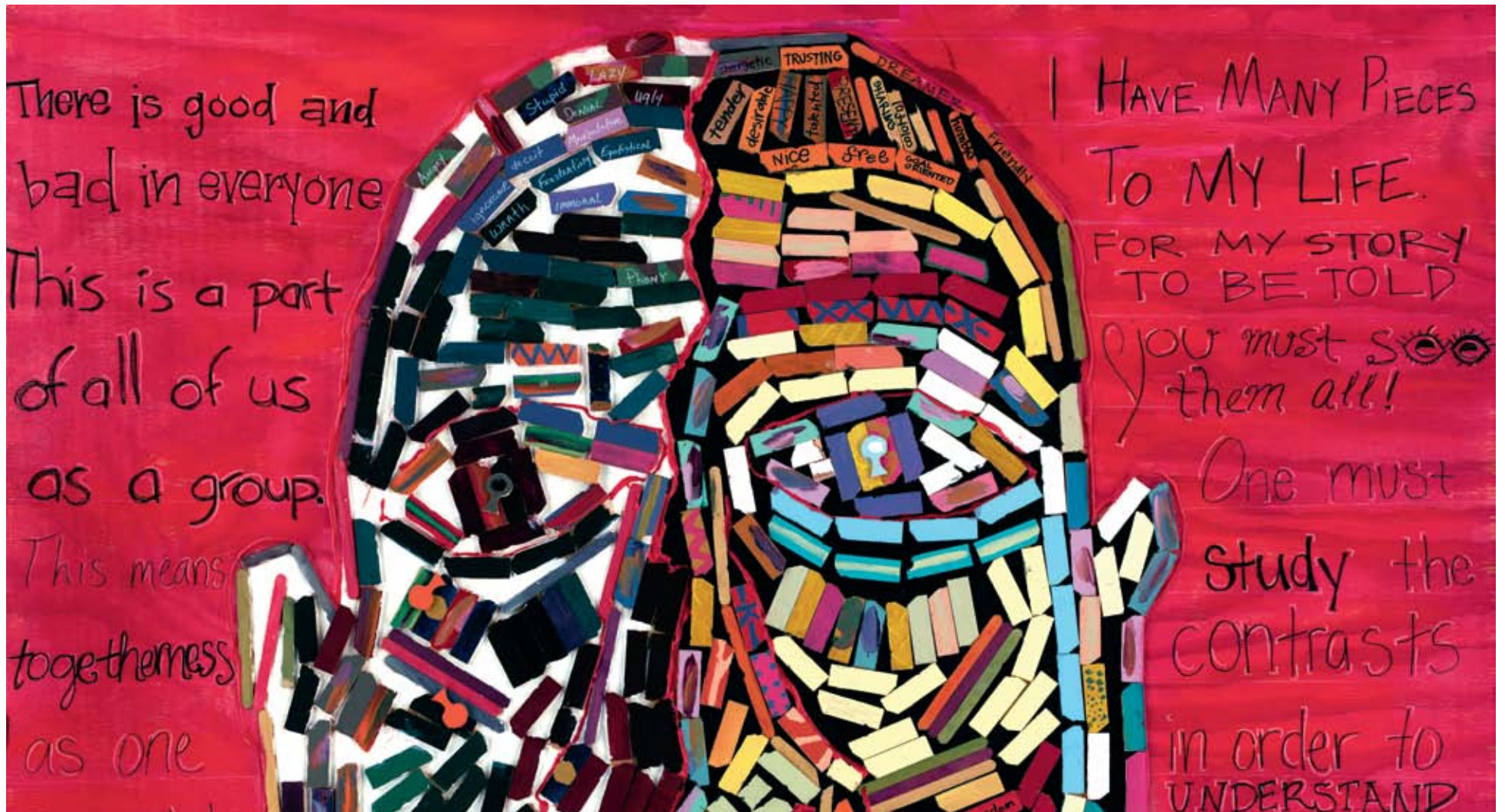
THE JOURNEY HOME

THE PARTICIPANT GENERATED NEWSLETTER OF ROOM IN THE INN'S CAMPUS FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

VOL. VII ISSUE 2

WWW.ROOMINTHEINN.ORG

FALL, 2009



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Campus for Human Development
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Vol. VII Issue 2

Room In The Inn's

Campus For Human Development
532 8th Avenue South
Nashville, TN 37203

P.O. Box 25309 • Nashville, TN 37202

P: (615) 251-9791 • F: (615) 251-3274

www.roomintheinn.org

email: administration@roomintheinn.org

Development Opportunities



Room In The Inn: A partnership with more than 160 local congregations to provide hospitality, shelter, and meals for up to 225 people each night from November 1 through March 31.



Campus Education Program: Volunteers and staff offer literacy classes, GED preparation, basic computer skills, Bible study, art, personal living skills, technology skills, job performance and retention programs, training for job searches, and Alcohol & Drug Recovery classes.



Medical Respite: Provides medically fragile homeless people a safe place to recover from illness or recent hospitalization. Shelter, meals, and medication are provided.



The Guest House: A safe alternative to jail, where intoxicated individuals can sober up. Offered in partnership with Metro Police.



Odyssey: A long-term community that coordinates and enhances the services we provide and seeks collaboration with other agencies in developing a comprehensive continuum of care for chronically homeless individuals.



Other programs include Support Services, Spanish-Speaking Services, and Congregational Helpline.



We are a 501c(3) non-profit religious organization, all charitable donations of cash or in-kind are tax deductible as allowed by law.

Investing in Human Capital

We seldom describe Room In The Inn and our Campus for Human Development in economic terms. We use theological language most of all, hoping to explain or inspire others to see the work of God in our service and even more importantly, to remind ourselves of this sacred work, should we forget. Yet the language of economics also applies to our efforts, especially in our present economic downturn.

Since the economy is the most important concern in the minds of our nation at this time—more important than eliminating poverty, more important than providing better health care for everyone, or combating racism, or ending war—one good way to frame Room In The Inn in economic terms is to think of our service as an investment in human capital.

The lottery and the stock market are games of chance. Invest at a low cost and hope for a return that is profitable. This is always a risk, a gamble with no absolute certainty of rewards. Still so many of us are willing to take a chance.

From our beginnings at Room In The Inn, I believe we have been willing to take a chance and invest in people's lives. It may have seemed as risky as the lottery or the stock market, but we were willing to take that chance.

And the chance we took was not simply to supply basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Of course these were important because they are so essential. But we wanted to provide this set of services as our first investment in the lives of people who had so little. We believed they were worth more than many in society thought of them.

And to do so at the time cost so little. So little space in our congregations, so little food, so little clothing, and so little time. Economically speaking, it was a cheap investment like buying a lottery ticket or a dollar-a-share stock offering.

Over time, however, we saw the potential of our investment. We saw that not only could we provide for basic needs, but we saw how these simple services brought about enormous human development. People came alive in the process—not just the homeless who found out again that there were thousands of people who cared about them and cared for them, but also volunteers who saw in the faces of the homeless a reflection of themselves and

the common humanity they shared.

Over time, these exchanges of love and support around a supper table led to more and more willingness to invest in the effort. From an economic perspective, people could see the rationale for more investment in this human enterprise. It made economic sense to help people find jobs, education, medical care and housing rather than languish on the streets and bleed resources. It made economic sense to help someone go from being a drain on the tax base to a tax producing citizen. It made economic sense to invest in human capital along with investing in downtown development. It made economic sense.

Over time, we saw how if we really wanted to invest in human development and change lives, what initially cost so little, if done well, would cost much more. So we invested more. And our investment takes us down a longer path than an overnight stay in a local congregation. Now the cost is more than ever. But the return on our investment is huge.

We are talking about people who have no hope finding hope again. We are talking about people who walk aimlessly, walking toward a future with the promise of employment and housing. We are talking about people who have been left to linger and die because of chronic illnesses getting the kind of health care that improves the quality of their life. We are talking about people who live in fear on the streets finding sanctuary and the support of friendship.

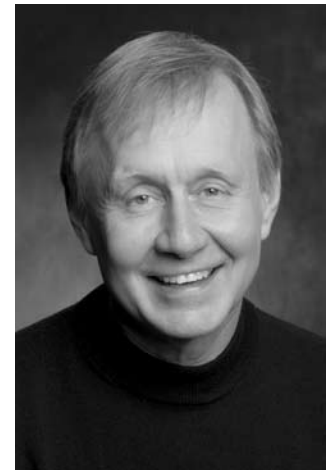
As we struggle in our nation and in our community to overcome our economic woes, I invite you to consider, as you consider your other investments, investing in the human capital that is before you in our city.

This is what our building project is about. It is an investment in a building, but the building allows us to invest in people. And I believe such an investment is not only good economics but also theologically sound.

—Charles Strobel

Gwen Benford, In Memoriam, October 11, 2009

The police officer under the railroad trestle on 8th Avenue South asked if I would be willing to claim her possessions until her family could be notified. Before us was the yellow crime scene tape marking off the spot where Gwen Benford had died while sleeping out in the unseasonably cool



temperatures on an October 11th Sunday morning. Strewn before us were her few possessions and some blankets that only a few hours earlier were warmed by her cold, lifeless body.

The officer had stopped to rouse her and a few of her friends sleeping together under the overpass when he was unable to wake her. Several other police cars arrived, and each officer knew Gwen. As the crime scene detectives arrived, the initial assessment was that she had died of natural causes. In fact, the previous Thursday, EMT's had transported her to the hospital. So her body was taken to the Medical Examiner's for an autopsy.

Natural causes seem appropriate for Gwen. It would be hard to imagine anyone hurting her on the streets, not only because everyone who knew her loved her, but also because Gwen could take care of herself.

My thoughts then turned inward—full of memories of Gwen, some so personal. All of them bringing a mixture of sadness and smiles.

I remember the many nights she would end up sleeping on my back porch, sometimes arriving as late as 3:00 am with a friend or two. Those times invariably brought her normal ruckus and commotion, but my sleep was too deep to get up and address the matter. So, I simply rolled over and continued my sleep. Later when I would see her, I would tell her, "Gwen, you know the neighbors will start to complain if you keep doing this." She would only laugh and say, "You tell 'em, I'm yours."

One night the police brought her by. They said she wanted to be taken to Fr. Strobel's. I told them, "Oh, she meant the Room In The Inn." She hollered out the window. "No, I meant your house!"

continued on page 3

We Celebrate

Those who found housing:

- John C.
- Charles K.
- William W. who has been housed over a year now
- Regina and Lonzo who bought a house in Murfreesboro
- Jerry W.
- James P.
- Jesse J.
- Kenny C.
- Teresa G.
- Alonzo P.
- James P.
- Calvin B.
- Wiley J.
- Jerry R.
- Samuel G.
- Carmelita B.
- Jerry M.
- Glen D.
- William H. and his wife
- David R.
- Rick W.
- Larry P.
- Robert S.
- Sam C.
- Larry H.
- Kurt W.
- Tom E.
- Alonzo F.

- Rick A.
- Kevin Q.
- Alfred H.
- William W.
- Verner O.
- Richard M.
- Mr. P
- Jerry R.
- Earl H.
- Romona G.
- Phillip M.

Odyssey members who have moved into housing:

- Ronnie G.
- Joe L.
- Don E.
- John I.

Those who found employment:

- Carl T. has a job at the VA
- Stephanie C. is working at Dunkin Donuts and saving money to get an apartment
- Keith H. has kept his job at Macy's for two years!
- Jeff F. has a full-time job!

Odyssey members who found jobs:

- Ronnie G.
- Herman J.
- Alan C.
- Fred D.
- Charles J.

Those who have something to celebrate:

- Rev. Elsie Elrod, volunteer, for her recent call to Christ's Community Church in Massachusetts
- Odyssey member Ricky K. who had a granddaughter named Ski
- Odyssey member Randell L. who paid off fines and had his driver's license re-instated
- Deion H. has been clean and sober for six years
- Kenny C. who reconnected with his family
- Sam N. was approved for disability
- Doug P. finished his first class toward becoming an electrician
- Michael M. going to Seattle to be with family
- Thelma H. is in a halfway house
- Greg B. graduated treatment, is working full-time, and has been clean and sober for six months
- Roger W. six months clean and sober
- Eric J. two months clean and sober
- Shawn P. two months clean and sober

- Daryl J. four and a half months clean and sober
- Wesley S. six months clean and sober
- Jason W. three months clean and sober
- Robert D. three months clean and sober
- Marcus M. three months clean and sober
- William R. three months clean and sober

Those who celebrate one year sobriety:

- Charles J.
- Johnny W.
- James C.
- Fred D.

We Mourn

- Gwen Benford
- Doug Goodman
- Dan McDermot
- Walker Roach
- Eugene Johnson
- Roderick Hyde
- Gary Boleyjack
- Linda Harris
- Herschel Mc.Kay, Sr., the father of one of our participants
- Farris Vaughner
- Ronald Hendrick



- Walter Raney, Guest House Shift Coordinator, *pictured above*
- Thomas Watkins
- Josiah Berger, son of Pastor Steve Berger, Grace Chapel
- Franklin Hawkins, Room In The Inn coordinator for City Road UMC
- Chris Levering, long time volunteer at Our Lady of the Lake
- Allan Hooper, dedicated Room In The Inn volunteer at Grace Baptist
- Fred Marquess
- William Hill
- William Brook Drescher

- Harry Singh, Educational Day Team member, *pictured below*



Memoriam

Continued from Page 2



Gwen was ours in a real sense. She belonged to her own loving family and also our community at Room In The Inn. She may have gone elsewhere at times and often struggled to find her way, but she always came around and hung out with her many friends here and on the street. I know so many homeless will be sad when they hear the news.

I write about Gwen because I know so many who loved her, but also because she is a reminder of the dozens of people who die every year on our streets. Over the years, we have displayed a memorial tree with all of their names individually listed on hundreds of leaves. Each name represents a story of a personal journey through life. Each person is someone's mother, father, brother, sister, husband, wife or child. This morning one of her friends said, "Gwen should be on the biggest leaf there."

Meanwhile, I remember Sunday morning and see the police and the homeless gathered together, and I think about how all of us knew her and felt her loss—a unifying moment she created around her place of death giving witness to our common humanity.

—Charles Strobel

From the Mailbox

Another thanks for the toiletries and support after the tornado!

Just wanted to let you know that the hard work of your community is sooooo appreciated. I wanted you and them to know that not only did their efforts help tornado victims here in the Middle Tennessee area, but the kits left over are being sent with church members to the City of Hope Orphanage in Mexico. They are leaving later this month and have packed a suitcase with all that were left to distribute to the children and adults there. They are badly needed there, will be put to great use and truly appreciated.

What We're Really Building

My Granny was a simple woman. With 9 children and 23 grandchildren I guess she really didn't have a choice.... But she loved beautiful things. Regardless of her financial circumstances, she always tried to make the dinner table beautiful, and with the help of Piggly Wiggly she was able to do just that.

In the 50s the grocery store had a promotion to encourage customer loyalty by offering pieces of china as an incentive for shopping with them. She would spend so much money, and then she would receive another piece of china. My father, understanding her desire to set a beautiful table for her guests, began shopping himself at Piggly Wiggly to help complete her set. If she had been given a set of the fanciest bone china in the world I don't know that she would have treasured it as much. With so many young children in the house, I am not

sure she ever dreamed it was possible to have a complete set but week by week with the help of the local grocery, she was able to complete a set of 12.

We never knew outside the family who would be at Granny's for dinner. Even when times were difficult, she always set the table and made a spread that exceeded our expectations. Her circle always included others. If you were a visitor—expected or not—you were anticipated. She valued sharing her food, friendship, and beautiful table.

Today, I am the proud owner of my Granny's 1955 Piggly Wiggly pattern china. It really wasn't until we started our construction at the Campus that I understood the lessons learned from her and Piggly Wiggly. Waiting for dollars to convert to a set of china took time and money. That set was bought with a lot of patience, desire and need. What she did each week, when she shared the best she had with family, friends, and visitors, was not really about the beautiful china. It was more.

As I look outside my office window toward the new building rising I realize

that, like my grandmother's china, this structure is being built with patience, desire and need. For 24 years, Room In The Inn has offered hospitality that has lead our community to identify their long term needs. Now, this building allows us to do more, like my grandmother did, to invest in the future. By creating not just a building that is beautiful but bigger and better, we can provide for basic needs and even anticipate them – expected or not.

Throughout our newsletter are stories of services that provide hope. Stories of relationships that have made a difference both for the givers and the receivers, stories of second chances and finding our voice. I believe that we will continue to unpack these countless and immeasurable lessons of our expansion plan for years just as I continue to unpack my Granny's china and the lessons I learned from her.

Looking out my window, I reflect on those who have generously given in the past and I am thankful that others have seen our desire for our "complete set of china." A new day is present. I am not



sure if grocery stores even have incentive programs like Piggly Wiggly's program anymore. Also, gone are the days where time is carved out for a family meal like my granny's, where time was spent together. My prayer is that no matter how big we become, how busy we get, or how beautiful our building appears to outsiders, we do not lose site of the opportunities to show God's love to each and every person that dares to dream again....

—Rachel Hester

A Happy Birthday Story by Mary W.

Every Thursday congregations, businesses, and other organizations serve lunch to approximately 200 participants in our downtown facility. There is nothing impersonal about this meal because there is no waiting in line to get institutional food on a plastic tray; the food is made with love and the conversation friendly and full of encouragement.

One afternoon, a volunteer called me about the lunch program saying she would be coming with her congregation the next day and wanted to bring her 12-year-old son. It was going to be his birthday, and he had told her he wanted to spend his birthday sharing food with people who are homeless. He also asked if he could bring some kind of treat to share with the guests since it would be his birthday, maybe some candy or dessert. Promising to keep a close eye on him during lunch, she described his deep compassion for people who are homeless.

The next day one of my co-workers told me with emotion in her voice that our young volunteer had arrived, and she handed me an envelope. Inside was a \$20 bill the young man's grandparents had given him for his birthday. Instead of spending it on himself, he entrusted it to us, asking that we use it to help someone who was homeless.

Before our meal, I took him and his mom outside where the guests were waiting to eat. I introduced the boy to the crowd and told them it was his birthday. I also let them know about the special donation he had made. Two hundred homeless people cheered him and sang the loudest chorus of "Happy Birthday" I have ever heard.

This act of generosity touched many of us here very deeply. As children, how many of us spent our birthday and holiday money selfishly, believing we deserved to have whatever we wanted? Even as adults, we often cling to what is ours and refuse to give even what we will not miss. We hold on to our money,



to our things, to our hearts. And when we receive, we often fail to express our gratitude. I realized my own poverty as I listened to the wild, off-key birthday song the guests offered the boy. They thanked him the best way they could. They celebrated both his gift and his spirit. I was ashamed of my own stinginess and by my ingratitude. All around us are wonderful opportunities

for generosity and thankfulness. This boy made me realize how many times I let those moments go by.

A twelve-year old boy left us with a special witness this past summer. With his gift, he honored the people who came to eat and gave them a chance to say thank you. In my opinion, he had a birthday of Biblical proportions.

Second Chances

by Bill C.

C. S. Lewis writes in *Mere Christianity* that, "Every one says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive, . . ." Yet he goes on to admit forgiveness is not particularly easy; it's just what we are expected to do.

We all make mistakes; we all have things in our past we regret. We can't go back and erase the errors of our life, and in many situations we cannot make direct amends to those we have wronged. The only way in which we are able to demonstrate our remorse is in the life we choose to live today. By taking positive steps to recognize our shortcomings and asking God to come into our lives and change us from the inside out, we ask others to forgive us and allow us the opportunity to re-establish our place in society.

Unfortunately, our culture is not always receptive to this idea. When one reads Welcome to the Guest House, we don't immediately connect the concept to second chance.

Yet, employing the principles of spirituality, love, respect and hope in a community of non-violence, the Guest House welcomes anyone who wishes to seek another chance at a better life.

Lives are being changed as participants engage in classes which offer an alternative to a life on the street. Here, individuals learn life skills, tolerance and how to be part of a community; all the while maintaining freedom from drugs and alcohol.

I first learned of the Campus from my dear friend. We were paying our

'debt to society' at Middle Tennessee Correctional Complex, and roomed together for several months. He talked at length about the Campus and the wonderful work being done. And his portrayal painted a magical place in my mind. Shortly after he completed his tour of duty, he called and asked if I was ready to go to work. "Absolutely," I replied. Having been rejected for a number of positions, it was with a bit of trepidation I called and set up an interview for the next day. The Campus was not what I had envisioned – at all, but it wasn't long until I realized it was indeed a magical place. At the Campus, one does not experience only a second chance, but multiple chances. It is truly a 'Haven' of rest; a refuge in the time of a storm. Not only have I, as well as many others, received an all important second chance, but we have been provided the opportunity to reestablish our integrity and develop a feeling of self worth again.

Take a moment to reflect on those individuals who have never had a second chance, or at least thought they never did. Those of us who, by the grace of God, have been given another chance are eternally grateful. Many of us know, left to our own devices, we may well have exhausted our chances long before now. We also pray that we will in turn be sensitive to others who may also need forgiveness so they might have the opportunity to rebuild their lives.



Songwriting 101

by Reggie B.

On a cold, dreary, Friday afternoon, the Room In The Inn family gathered within the warm confines of the David Lipscomb Auditorium to take part in the Campus' first ever song writing session. All departments of the Campus were represented, totaling some 60 volunteers, staff, and participants; not a song writer among us. That being said, what we achieved that day was nothing less than a miracle.

With the help of three of Nashville's most talented songwriters/musicians, we wrote a song called "Dream Again." Songwriters Billy Dean, Anna Wilson, and Monty Powell laid the ground rules necessary for such a large musical collaboration. After this hour long instruction period, we formed ourselves into small groups and were given the task of coming up with words, phrases, and ideas that described the heart and soul of our Room In The Inn ministry. We came up with words like "hope," "forgiveness," "community," "friendship," "love," and "service." Soon phrases jumped out like "love and a blanket," "where you from my friend?," "how long can I stay?," and others, many others. These were arranged on large sheets of paper and placed all around the musicians on stage. As the musicians began to put our words to music, the mood in the auditorium became anxious.

And then, the miracle. People shouted from their hearts words and phrases that were in fact personal experiences from their time associated with Room In The Inn. Suddenly the mood became jubilant and festive. A free-for-all took place as phrase after phrase and

word after word grew into a song. Our energy was so intense that one musician remarked, "There is so much energy in here that we could create at least four songs." Then, we reached our destination. At some point during our mingling a theme had taken shape, and our stories had been told. It seemed to me that the Grace of God had weaved it all together, from the beginning to the end, forming us as a community, daring us to dream while reminding us that, if we failed, the invitation remained... to dream again.

To Dream Again

Well that's me coming through the door
Not the man I was before
Give me one more second chance again
A place where they know your name
Love and a blanket to ease the pain
A smile and a hug and a where you from my friend

And a chance to dream again, count my blessings
Before my journey ends, change directions
A place of Grace and Hope, there's room in the inn
And a chance to dream again

There's a story inside all of us
A story that we all can trust
A place at the table come on in
Good food and a kind word said
I can say my prayers and lay my head
Doesn't matter who you are or where you've been

And a chance to dream again, count my blessings
Before my journey ends, change directions
A place of Grace and Hope, there's room in the inn
And a chance to dream again

Seeing is believing serving is receiving
It's when the day is done we all are one

And a chance to dream again, count my blessings
Before my journey ends, change directions
A place of Grace and Hope, there's room in the inn
And a chance to dream again
That's me walking out that door...not the man I was before

Copyright: Song Sessions, LLC

Attention Room in the Inn Volunteers!
Tis' the season! Both for helping the homeless,
and for shopping with a conscience!
Your purchase of
"I Didn't Know That" Comes From The Bible
by Karlen Evins
will help to benefit Room In The Inn
To purchase, go to: www.karlenevins.com/riti

Building A Better Life

by Edith C.

When I was twenty years old I visited Mexico City. I saw a man on the street crawl into a garbage can, and I was appalled. I thought something like that didn't happen in the United States. Now I know it does. Sometimes I think about the people I see on the streets as



refugees. Not refugees from a natural disaster or from a war, but from the ravages of daily life. I flip through my mental files referring to what I know about socioeconomics, addiction, mental illness, and spirituality. I think about our society's ills and society's triumphs and I still flounder. There are many times when I seek to escape through books, movies, and fun distractions. Yet reality continues to find me as I scoop dog poop, clean my house, pay my bills, and show up. I think my triumph is in showing up prepared for the day and willing to accept what the day offers...the good, the bad...the ugly. When I go on Fridays to Room In The Inn, I often think about why people are there; why they choose to do the work. I think it is because they wish to give and because they care about a population many consider to be "throw aways." The beauty of Room In The Inn is in the idea of spiritual recycling; a commitment to helping individuals retool for a better life. I love watching my co-workers operate. I see Wendy laughing about something, Ms. Shirley tied to her computer, Charlie running around excited about the progress on the building, Rachel showing me her Austin's version of a pinch pot which she lovingly places on her desk. Downstairs, Jeff is politely and patiently helping someone at the desk, Maggie is taking someone to her office to help them find housing, and Jalonke is putting on some music in the day room to accompany my art

project of the day. I run into Mr. Poole, the job counselor, who consistently responds "I'm great!" when I ask how he is. I treasure the hugs some of the participants give me. I laugh with one of the Odyssey men teasing me about my hair looking like I stuck my finger in a light socket. I look forward to the enthusiasm of our Belmont interns as we design a new piece of art. I like listening to the men gossip about different things as we complete a banner. It is a thrill to take my classes to the Frist. I appreciate the many times one of the participants helps me carry something out to my truck when I leave, and that often Ron will give me a ride to the door in the mornings when he sees me loaded down with art supplies. I never ask the men I work with about themselves because I think being with them is like being with any new person...information just comes out naturally. A lot of the information I have heard from them over the years is sad, so it is particularly encouraging when the new life they live in Odyssey heals some of that sadness. This is my lesson. There is always hope.



Nashville Attorneys Lend a Listening Ear and H.E.L.P.

by Shannon W.

At Room In The Inn's Campus we are searching to provide hope and build human capital by providing a comprehensive array of services to individuals facing homelessness. One of the many ways we are doing that is with the recent launch of our monthly legal clinic.

In partnership with Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell, & Berkowitz, PC and H.E.L.P. (Homeless Experience Legal Protection), Room In The Inn's Campus is the host of a legal clinic offering a variety of legal advice and answers to questions for individuals taking part in our services and programs. Volunteer attorneys, librarians, paralegals, and interns visit the Campus every third Wednesday morning of the month offering advice and lending an ear.

To date, the H.E.L.P. legal Clinic has been a huge success. Over 150 individuals have received legal advice since its inception in March 2009. Over 30 legal professionals have volunteered, making the legal clinic a safe and confidential place for individuals to get answers to their questions.

Questions cover a wide range of issues including driver's license reinstatement, criminal records and history, child support and custody, landlord/tenant issues, social security and entitlement benefits, wills, divorce, bankruptcy as well as many others.

Often times the issues are preventing individuals from applying for a job, seeking benefits, or even obtaining housing. Most questions are basic and require just a few minutes or a phone call. Other issues require some follow up but can be resolved fairly easily and address issues that were a major hindrance previously.

Melissa Wibbens, coordinator of the H.E.L.P. legal Clinic, commented "While we hope the legal assistance we provide is beyond satisfactory to the clients we serve, volunteer attorneys reciprocate extreme satisfaction with the one-on-one nature of the Clinic, the helpfulness of the RITI staff, and the relationship divides we are able to bridge by coming together, and acting as stewards and listeners to and for each other."

In this way, individuals are helped substantially with not only legal issues but also with the intrinsic value of being heard. It gives them an outlet in which to voice their concerns regarding their legal situation and find answers they need to help solve the problem. The legal clinic has been a success not only for the number of people served but also in that it allows attorneys to give their gifts and talents to aid individuals in their community while providing hope and hospitality.

The legal clinic at RITI's Campus is part of a greater network throughout the United States. H.E.L.P. began in New Orleans in 2004 as the brainchild of federal district court judge, Jay Zainey. Judge Zainey was accompanying fellow judges to serve a meal at a local shelter when he began to think about how much assistance attorneys could provide to individuals facing homelessness. Judge Zainey began to round up local volunteer attorneys to staff a weekly legal clinic. The clinic was a huge success and soon the clinic began to spread to other cities with the help of law firms that have offices in multiple cities. Currently, fifteen cities across the U.S. host H.E.L.P.

Room In The Inn's legal clinic provides individuals with the means necessary to gain hope and achieve their goals. We are thankful to the men and women who have volunteered their services to make this service a reality. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Melissa Wibbens at 615-726-7305 or mwibbens@bakerdonelson.com.

Odyssey Team Report: Annual Meeting Aug. 27, 2009

by Ursula C., Odyssey Coordinator

The Odyssey program is a progression through basic steps of establishing a stable and productive life. The program has been developed to meet each individual's needs including life skills, a rehabilitation program based on the twelve-step program of AA, and self-awareness.

In addition to hospitality, Odyssey offers healing of the mind, body, and spirit through a range of Campus based services. It also focuses on education specialized to teach a basic skill set that enables the participants to move to employment. The program can be as short as 8 months or as long as two years. The program is named Odyssey to refer



Odyssey gardening class

to the "long journey home" for these men, and we try to walk alongside chronically homeless men on their way "home."

Often our men come to us with a broken spirit. They no longer believe in themselves as a consequence of multiple unfortunate events. They have fallen so many times, and they feel they have disappointed themselves and others more times than they can count. They may have been through rehab several times,

only to relapse again. They may have done time in the criminal justice system that more often than not strips them of whatever self-esteem they have left. They don't know if their children ever want to hear from them again. They feel their physical health slipping at an ever-increasing rate. They are afraid of life on the streets... And then they walk into Room In the Inn's Campus for Human Development...As imperfect as we are, we try to extend the hand of grace to each one, because God first loved us.

We invite men to be a part of our community. The Odyssey program is broken into three phases, the first lasting four months called the "Emerging Self." This is where the men start peeling away the layers starting with getting off alcohol and drugs, tending to their mental and physical health issues, and learning to live in a community.

The second phase lasts for four more months and we refer to this as the Job Readiness phase, this phase helps prepare the men for employment. They also address their legal issues and face their criminal backgrounds. We help build their confidence as they as they continue on their journey.

The remainder of the program is spent in a third phase, where the men are working and saving 75% of their earnings. The money they save is their nest egg to take with them as they transition into independent housing. In the past, 99 participants began their journey with the Odyssey program. Many of them have reconnected with family, obtained employment, maintained sobriety, and moved into permanent housing.

Now I would like to tell you the story of one Odyssey participant's journey home. John was walking the streets of Nashville one night just thinking about his life full of chaos and how much pain and misery he was in and how bad he



needed help to get off drugs. He ended up running into someone else on the streets and asking if there was anywhere he could find detox with no money and no insurance. He ended up at the Guest House in January 2007 seeking alcohol and drug treatment. He started in the Downtown Clinic's detox program in February and graduated five months later. This was John's first attempt at any kind of rehabilitation program after over 20+ years of addiction. After completing detox he was given 30 days to find a job before he would have to leave the Guest House. With his extensive criminal background and slim number of jobs available this was almost impossible, so after weeks and weeks of job searching he decided he would continue his journey in the Odyssey program.

John completed all three phases of Odyssey and one day while he was here John attended a funeral and burial service for one his fellow Odyssey members. He happened to notice that two of the men working at the burial site were his brothers. He reconnected with them that day after the years of no contact, and he continues to build on the relationship he now has with them. After 15 months in the Odyssey

program, John thought it was time for him to continue his life beyond Odyssey, so he transitioned out of the program and is now living in his own apartment. John has been sober for two years and seven months. He currently works for Goodwill Industries and has since bought a truck. John visits the Campus from time to time and is a great example of strength, courage, perseverance, and hard work with a little bit of hope and grace from Room In The Inn.

The Greek poet, Homer wrote the Odyssey in 800 B.C. Cyclops, whirlpools, sorceresses, and sirens were the dangers and temptations that Odysseus had to overcome to make his journey home. For people living on the streets of Nashville, it is mental illness, physical disabilities, addictions and a host of other barriers that keep them from home and elicit the label of homelessness. Change is seldom overnight. It takes time for these men to regain their confidence, dignity and establish some stability in their lives. These long term programs provide the time for that to happen.

Taking Stock In People



Basic Needs



Job Readiness



Campus Store



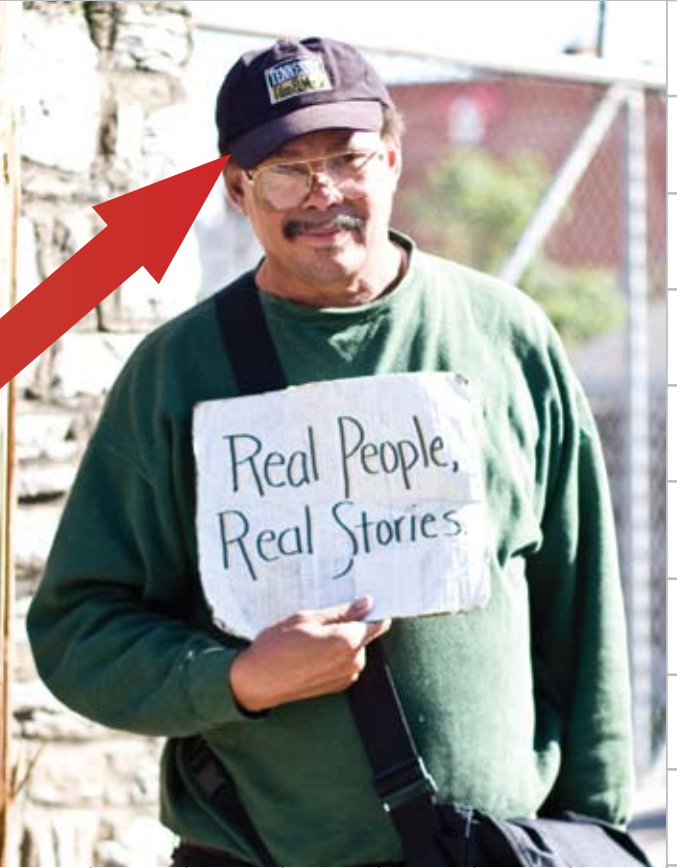
Foot Clinic



Relationships



Education



Spirituality



Community



A Commercial for a Building Risin’

For almost two years our building and expansion plans have been under the direction of our Project Manager, Lisa Stetar. Her duties are extremely complex. She started with no real strategic plan to follow for fundraising, development, and construction. But her high energy and excellent organizational skills have given all of us excitement and hope.

1. Building Committee: From the beginning, we have had the wonderful support and input of a highly expert building committee. Its members are Rodney Wilson, Mike Hill, Mike Nacarato, Reese Smith, Steve Fridrich, Charles Biter, Paul Lynes, Jim Fleming, John O’Shea, Joanne Sowell, and Tara Armistead. They have helped Lisa negotiate contracts, offer cost-savings changes and advice on design changes.

2. Architects and General Contractors: Oxford Architecture is providing the architectural and engineering services for the project, and American Constructors is serving as our construction manager at risk and leading the build team. Lisa remains in daily communication with them, so that there are “no surprises” and everything goes as scheduled.

3. Minority firms and hiring of the homeless: One of our most important objectives in the construction phase is to hire minority firms and to create jobs for some of our homeless participants. Our HUD funding requires that we provide employment opportunities for low income workers. Furthermore, because of federal funding, the Davis Bacon Act requires that all workers on our project receive the prevailing wage for their job classification. We had over 70 applicants at the start, and currently have hired 5 workers. We hope to get more hired, but because of the economic downturn, most of our subcontractors are already overstaffed. In early November, we plan to provide OSHA safety training for many of the individuals who made the effort to apply for work on our project.

4. Staff and volunteers: Rachel Hester and all of our staff have been

meeting all summer to make plans for utilizing the new building, including new staffing patterns and expanded programs of education, employment, medical care, and housing. She has everyone excited and looking forward to the new opportunities.

5. Development Committee: Much of the monies and resources that have been donated have come from our planning, under the strong leadership of Jim Johnson, Mike Nacarato, and Beverly Bond. Already \$9.5 million has been raised from all over the community, including foundations, businesses, banks, congregations, government, and individuals.

6. Accountability: Lisa keeps close tabs on all the devilish details of government contracts and their compliance, grant and loan draw-downs, cash-flow oversight, billings, grant writing, site supervision, purchase orders, bid reviews, and a host of other matters for the project. Our Board expects accurate and consistent accountability in every aspect of the project.

7. The homeless themselves: For all the chaos surrounding construction that causes inconveniences, the homeless have been so patient and forgiving. It is exciting to see their excitement. They know this building is for them, and they have hearts of gratitude.

8. Financials: Although we have raised in cash, contracts, or pledges \$9.5 million, we still have a \$3.3 million shortfall to complete the new building and renovate the old building. Yet we believe that with the help of such wonderful supporters like you, we will reach our goal. We want to thank you in advance for helping us to achieve it.

Finally, all of us (staff, volunteers, donors, and homeless) realize that we are on the brink of creating an improved facility that will embody even better our seven core values of spirituality, love, hospitality, respect, hope, community and non-violence, and thus give hope and opportunity to Nashville’s poorest. We hope you will help us write this next chapter.

The Gift of Voice

by Jeff M.

Each person has a gift to offer the world. Without regard to class, ethnicity, or most any other category, human beings are capable of producing thoughts, feelings, and opinions. No matter our background or lifestyle, we have the ability to be creative, to bring some kind of order out of chaos, or sometimes to offer some needed chaos to order. We have our story, which offers us the grounding of truth, something we can use to locate ourselves in an uncertain world. All of these are part of the gift that is the voice.

Part of my job, as our director, Rachel, frequently reminds me, is to give our participants a voice. How can I give people a gift that is already theirs? It is not so much a matter of giving people their voices as it is one of helping them find what they already have, giving them opportunities for self-expression. Society often sends messages that are limiting. The voices of celebrities are treated as most important. Self-expression is exchanged for the latest trends and fashions. Entertainment is delivered as news, and vice versa. The wealthy can purchase more air time from our mass media. Where can each individual find her or his voice in the midst of these cultural realities? These messages are especially powerful to those who are poor. Life on the streets and in social service agencies often strips one of the ability to make choices. People go without quiet, individual time for introspection. Communities try to move the poor out of sight through public policy. Stereotypes and snap judgments cause people to devalue what the homeless have to say. I have the opportunity to see people rediscover their voices, and find ways to express them at Room In The Inn:

- Participants at Room In The Inn’s Campus interact with our community of supporters on Facebook, discussing topics that are relevant to all people through projects like “The Tuesday Question”
- A weekly songwriting class has begun at the Campus, giving participants the opportunity to create and record their own original songs
- Our art classes are among the most popular options at the Campus. The “Face of Recovery” installation, featured on many of our promotional items, was created from popsicle sticks and scrap wood, telling the story of recovery as seen by men in our Odyssey program
- Participants in our weekly Newspapers and Writing class, taught by Anne Paine of *The Tennessean*, discuss issues in the news and often have letters to the editor published
- A group of friends who don’t often find their way inside to take part in our education programs rounded up dozens of people to write sympathy cards for the brother of a woman who recently died

In ways both big and small, we seek to give people tools to rediscover and to use the voices they already have. We believe that we are stronger when we come together as a community, and as such, we recognize that true community cannot be achieved with the voices of only a few. It takes us all.

Staff, participants, and volunteers recently gathered with three leading songwriters in a Song Session, from which we, as a group, co-wrote a song. We spent the afternoon in groups, brainstorming possible lines for a song that would express our diverse experiences at Room In The Inn into a common theme. The “hook” for the song that captivated the whole group was “a chance to dream again.” That is the gift of Room In The Inn for all of us. It is a chance to dream, to bind ourselves into something larger, a chance to respect one another and to find respect for ourselves. It is from that experience that we can discover our voices, and offer our gift, our song, to the world.

Women's Class at Campus



The Women's class is an opportunity to address issues of homelessness particular to women.

A Neverending Story

by Andrew C.

People living on the street often become a part of the scenery for us, whether for right or wrong it just happens. Yet, after a few months under my belt at Room In The Inn, I have begun paying attention to those walking up and down the roads I travel. More often than not, I do not know the person sojourning on the road with me, yet on a good night I will know about a third of the people walking or standing along Murfreesboro Road.

Why look? Well, it's the same reason your son or daughter looks for people going up or down the hall at school, or you look around the congregation at church. We're all just looking for some friends.

There comes a point when a participant becomes someone you look forward to talking to about the game last night, or what's going wrong with the carburetors on my motorcycle. I look because I am hoping to see a friend.

Be careful little eyes what you see, so the saying goes. And it's true. I will never forget the time when it would have been so much easier to keep looking ahead...

My year as an Americorps Volunteer

here at the Campus is focused on designing and implementing a 30-60 day court diversion program of sorts. It is a pilot program for Nashville. It was the end of the program with our first batch of guys at the end of July, I was leaving my parents' home with a friend, crossing a major intersection, when I noticed a man holding a sign. I didn't think much of it until I looked as I always do, and I saw a familiar face...I was crushed.

Ricky was one of those guys that you just liked. He was hard working and completely sincere in his hopes of recovery. We had celebrated his 50th birthday during his court-ordered time here and he told me how I could paint the ugly rubber spoiler on my Alfa Romeo. They say not to become too invested in people when working in addiction and recovery, but this was my first group of guys and I had hopes for them.

They also say don't tell the driver to pull over, hop out of the car, and run towards a man holding a sign in the middle of a busy intersection; but again I am new. Ricky should not have been holding that sign. He should not have been intoxicated. He should have been sitting in the Guest House reading one of his cheesy novels. He should have



been thinking about what he needed to pack before going to the transitional housing we had for him.

I made Ricky promise me he would come back the next day. And he did, fidgety from the crack he had smoked which came from those kind donations of drivers in their automobiles. The one thing he remembered from the previous day was that I actually saw him and had the nerve to run up to him. He knew why I had looked.

The only place I have seen Ricky since then is on police arrest reports. He is stuck in the revolving door of the judicial system from which we tried to free him. I learned an important lesson from Ricky that day, be careful looking at the man with a shopping cart or holding a sign...because you may just drive away with a broken heart.

Andrew is Room In The Inn's first Americorps volunteer and will be here until next summer.

More Than A Toy

Join us! Friday, December 4th from 9-4pm and Saturday, December 5th from 9-2pm.

We're looking for groups and individuals to help provide gifts for our participants to "purchase" for their families. Last year more than 120 participants shopped for toys. This is NOT just about toys, but a gesture of reconciliation and self-worth—a way to reconnect with family and loved ones. Participants earn points to shop by attending education classes. Presents purchased with these points will be wrapped and mailed to arrive just in time for Christmas.

How can you help?

- Ask friends, clubs, organizations, and family to collect toys or gift cards (Target, McDonalds, Wal-Mart, Michael's etc.)
- Deliver new and unwrapped toys on Sunday, November 29th from 2-5pm
- Drop-off site St. Edward Church, 188 Thompson Lane
- Monetary donations to help with mailing are always welcome

Thank you in advance for making a difference in the lives of children whose parents call the streets of Nashville home. For more information contact Karen Stevens at 251-9791 or karen.stevens@roomintheinn.org.

Suggested Donations:

- Crafty items for kids, i.e. play-dough, jewelry making kits.... any kind of kits or do-it-yourself projects (Michael's has a great selection)
- Anything for teenagers, i.e. purses, notebooks/diaries, jewelry, watches, body lotions and sprays (both guys and girls), CDs or CD players, radios (you can find these for around \$5 at Family Dollar or The Dollar Store) — this is the category that we have the least amount of stuff for... and most people have teenage children
- Board games, games & more games (think gifts for a couple of children to share)

Save The Dates

Sunday, December 6, 2:30 p.m.

Concert Chorale's annual holiday concert benefits Room In The Inn. The Concert Chorale of Nashville will present a benefit concert of Handel's Messiah at St. Henry's Catholic Church located at 6401 Harding Road. "Angels" will give \$15 for each person who attends the Concert to benefit Room In The Inn. A love offering also will be taken to support this valuable life affirming program for Nashville's homeless.

Wednesday, December 9,

9am-4:30pm Municipal Auditorium
Project Homeless Connect
200 Volunteers Needed

Project Homeless Connect is a one-day event to provide one-stop professional support, community agency services, and quality of life resources to homeless individuals and families. There are several opportunities to help. Room In The Inn will offer a foot clinic as well as staff volunteers through out the day. Additional services to include: medical, dental, eye care, job and housing assistance, pet care, haircuts, clothing, ID's. Contact Karen Stevens at 251-9791 karen.stevens@roomintheinn.org. Shifts are flexible---one hour or more!

Wednesday, December 10, 7pm

Christ Church Cathedral located at 900 Broadway
10th Anniversary Nashville Unlimited Christmas Concert with Dave Pomeroy and Friends to Benefit Room In The Inn. In past years Dave's special friends have included Maura O'Connell, Pat McLaughlin, Ashley Cleveland, Beth Nielsen Chapman, EmmyLou Harris, The Nashville Mandolin Ensemble, Annie Sellick, Jonell Mosser, Buddy Greene...and always "surprise guests!" This year's line up has yet to be announced, but promises to put you in the Christmas spirit.

Sunday, December 13

10th Annual Christmas Bluegrass Benefit Concert at Station Inn
Hosted by hosts Eddie & Martha Adcock. For times, check out www.eddieandmarthaadcock.com

A Place To Belong

by Jeff M. and Melvin S.

"Reverend!"

"Bishop!"

At some point in each day, those two words are exchanged, along with a handshake, so we can "get some Spirit" from one another. It's a ritual of belonging. "The Bishop" and I belong to one another. After Melvin heard me preach a sermon on Easter morning a few years ago, he started calling me "Reverend," even though a Reverend I am not. For Melvin, the giving of a nickname is a sign of respect in a setting like ours. Since he calls me Reverend, I decided Melvin outranks me, so I call him "The Bishop." You know you've made it with me if I start calling you by a nickname.

* * * * *

Melvin and I couldn't come from more different places, but we have both stopped for a while at the same destination on our journeys.

I came to Room In The Inn as a full time volunteer through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 2006. I had no experience working with people who are homeless. My upbringing in Indiana was middle class and comfortable. I had no experience of going without more than I needed. I had a lot of experience serving God within the walls of upper middle class, white churches.

And, indeed, God is served there. The privilege of taking a "year off" from life to serve in an unknown field in a new place (The South – eek!) was a good opportunity to take some time to reflect upon my predetermined vocation, becoming a leader in that upper middle class white church, maybe even a "Reverend." Instead, I found a place where I found true belonging. It wasn't a "year off" from life that I gained, but an integral part of my being. I found a home with those who are homeless. I found that I was more comfortable hanging out in the alley than I was in the church I thought was my home. I found acceptance, and a community



Melvin and Jeff in the Campus Day Room

that loves me just as I am. And here I am still, in my fourth year of working at Room In The Inn's Campus, serving on the education team as Spiritual Development Chaplain.

Melvin has been on the staff at Room In The Inn's Guest House for nearly six years now. As he says, God brought him back—back to the streets where he spent many years homeless before finding sobriety, stability, and housing. Though these blessings mark Melvin's life now, he says God brought him back because he still spends his days with his family on the streets, now serving them as a member of the Campus staff. Melvin says that he spent many years not sensing God's presence in his life; he felt as though his life had no purpose. About that time he says, "My imagination was clouded. I was here to do nothing. People make you feel that way, but God has other plans."

Melvin has known many of Room In The Inn's participants for many years. His experiences on the streets shape the ways he works with his guests, offering them the same kinds of hospitality he often turned down. Melvin belongs to Room In The Inn because he has been there. He says, "You can't work here and not feel belonging, because you feel the pain of others here."

* * * * *

Our relationships at the Campus are not the kind that are sentimentalized. We don't often use the poetic flourish of a Hallmark card to communicate. Instead, we have something that is more genuine for us. As Melvin said, we walk with one another through pain. And homelessness involves some of the most painful experiences in life. We walk together through rejection, through addiction, through violence, and through death. But, in the end, we know that we belong to each other. Whether our belonging is shaped by finding home in a place we least expect, or in a place that is familiar, we draw strength from one another. And how do we know we've found that place? For me, it's in a nickname and a handshake.

FRIEND REQUEST

Room In The Inn is now on Facebook! Join today and connect with others who are involved in Room In The Inn. Learn about upcoming events, discuss issues you may have in your congregation, respond to invitations and more.

Room in the Inn & Otter Creek Church – A Partnership of Growth

by Doug S.

For many years, Otter Creek has been partnering with the Campus to be a Room In The Inn site. So with the start of the 2009-2010 year we are entering into our 24th year of growing. For Otter Creek the idea of being the hands and feet of Jesus as we serve and grow to know those who bless us with their presence is certainly one important aspect of our motivation for giving. As a church we understand and believe our congregation to be the incarnational body of Christ. We take Christ as our leader and our example. We try to live each day as He lived. We try to serve each day as He served. We acknowledge that within our

congregation we have individual members gifted to be “hands” while others are gifted to be “feet.” For some this may mean serving our Room In The Inn guests by handing them a meal. For others serving may translate into driving the bus to pick up and deliver our guests to and from the Campus. We grow to look more like Christ as we serve and allow the power of His Spirit to lead us.

However, growth takes place in a second and important way. In Matthew 25 we read the parable of the goats and sheep in which Jesus portrays judgment day and lays out the criteria for being welcomed into His Kingdom. Many of us fail to understand that when Jesus declared, “as often as you do it for the least of these my brothers, you do it to me,” He was not



calling us to be His hands and feet. He was calling us to see the face of Jesus in the lives of our brothers and sisters who are hungry, naked, sick and in prison. For Otter Creek, we grow to look more like Jesus as we sharpen our vision and stop looking at ourselves and our service to the marginalized as “being Jesus” and realize that we are serving Jesus as we serve. The understanding that Jesus lives in the hurting and those in poverty as much as he lives in each of us helps us to grow in humility and in love. Love for those that Jesus loved because he

first loved us when we were unlovable becomes our motivation for serving. We come to understand that in the eyes of Jesus those of us at Otter Creek are no different than those living on the street. And as we serve and get to know and love those who come through the Campus we grow to realize that truth as well.

We grow as we serve with the Campus through the Room In The Inn program. But we also grow as we are served by those who come through the door at the Campus as participants in the Room In The Inn program. May we grow to look more like the hands and feet of Jesus as we serve. And may we grow as the Spirit helps us to see the face of Jesus in those that cross our paths through the Room In The Inn.

Youth Volunteers

By Wendy S.

This summer we had several youth groups to volunteer by serving and learning more about homelessness. When talking with the youth, I found that what they expected to see and what they actually witnessed were very different. Their eyes were opened.

I had the pleasure of sitting down with Hannah D. and talking to her about her experiences at the Campus. She stated that most of the youth live in a different world than the people at the Campus. Many young people are not aware of nor do they realize the severity of homelessness in Nashville. They go to school, attend their church or temple, and hang out with their peers; not realizing the many other important issues going on around them. As president of the youth board, Hannah is spreading the word about homelessness by working drives within her school and community. She is spreading awareness and understanding about the significance of helping others.

Hannah's volunteerism for the Room In The Inn program at the Campus has been very helpful to her because she is experiencing directly the needs and is able to spread awareness to other teens. The little



things are the most significant. Little things like the personal connections made by having a conversation with a participant as they are waiting for the congregation van to arrive or by having a friendly card game with the guys in the Odyssey program. Anyone can learn the statistics, but they will never quite grasp the understanding or significance without really immersing themselves firsthand.

After volunteering several times and learning about the many services we have to offer the participants, Hannah encountered a homeless person one night as she was strolling in the park. She was not afraid and was able to know



where to send him for services and help. She felt empowered. We hope to continue to reach out to our youth and to help them understand the significance of helping others.



If you have a youth group interested in helping, please call Wendy Smotherman, 251-9791, wendy.smotherman@roomintheinn.org

Educational and Day Services

by Jon M.

As the coordinator for Educational Day Services, I lead a team that provides direct services and educational classes to the general homeless population. This year more than 4,000 individuals have come through our doors seeking help. Each time we provide a service to someone, we document what they have received on an Encounter Form. On the front there is space for the participant to let us know what services they need. On the back is a shaded area, where the staff member or volunteer who served them writes down what services were provided. Last week I was reviewing some of these forms when I came across the word HOPE in capital letters printed on the front of the form. I thought to myself, "A participant requested Hope?" So I turned the page to see what was written on the back, and a staff member had written "Hope." Hope was needed and hope was given. I was so pleased with this that I began to show it to some of my team. They reminded me that "Hope" was short for Dispensary of Hope, but that didn't matter anymore.

You see, I have a plaque that hangs outside my office with a verse from Jeremiah 29:11. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future." We might not always be able to provide every service that people are seeking, but we can always provide Hope.

As I compiled my year-end statistical report, I was amazed at how many more people we have served this year over last year: 40% more lunches; 50% more showers; 250% more bus passes, and 300% more prescriptions.

We have also been able to expand our services to those who are medically fragile and most vulnerable. Maggie and Charley are our case managers who work with this segment

of our population. They coordinate services and referrals to other agencies, helping participants apply for disability, connect with medical and mental health services, and find housing. With the efforts of our entire team, we have been able to help many of our medically fragile participants break out of the cycle of homelessness and get into stable housing this year. Just since May we have helped 17 participants get into stable, permanent housing.

Our Education Program, led by Sara, has grown, as well. We offered about 250 more classes this year than last, and our class attendance grew by 2,000.

Each morning, as I park and take the long walk around the construction site to our building, I am reminded about the wonderful future that awaits us in about nine months, when our new building will be completed. We are actively working now to prepare our programs and services to be ready for the new capacity we will have in our facility. For example, currently we have only 3 classrooms available for the General Population. In the new building we will have 13. So we're beginning to plan curriculum beyond just individual class sessions. Right now a committee of staff members is developing a series of four courses, which will each be one week long: a full month of integrated courses centered around Life Skills and Job Readiness. For each week-long course that is completed, participants will receive a certificate. Those who complete all four courses will receive a diploma, which will be given to them at a graduation ceremony and celebration.

This brings me to some opportunities for you to be involved. We have a real need for volunteers to teach classes in their areas of expertise or interest. We also have expanded needs for volunteers to lead an activity in our Day Room such as games, film festivals, or like the group from Trevecca who brought a Karaoke machine for a Mardi Gras celebration. That was a memorable day. Please come join us on the Education Team and enjoy your memorable experience.

Building Inspiration Through Art

by Edith C.

I work with people. I have titles for myself. I call myself "artist," "actress," "trainer." My brother calls himself "addict," "alcoholic," "felon." Our labels support stereotypes and prejudices. I work with people.

When the labels are removed, we connect human to human in our pain and joy; in our strengths and weaknesses. And so begins the journey of exchange. Can the helper exist without the helpee? In February, I will have been employed for 5 years as an art therapist. My job for the men in Odyssey is to design art that reflects recovery, and for the general population, art projects designed to impart some type of knowledge about art and its processes. A natural output from this work has been the art shows we have offered to the community.

Before I continue, I want to make sure to thank ALL of the staff and volunteers who teach art classes, offer their galleries, do our framing, design our publicity, and coordinate the details. The titles of our art shows impart what we hope the community will understand about our work at Room In The Inn. Our shows, "Degrees of Separation" and "A Place at the Table," are poignant in their intent. "Degrees of Separation" communicated the idea of just how close we might be to a person who is homeless; one step away from a family member; two steps away from a co-worker who lost her job from addiction; three steps away from the person we see on the street, arguing with himself. It also showed universal themes in the art displayed: pictures of home, pets, people, and beautiful landscapes.

People left that art show recognizing the incredible talent of our participants and also seeing our universal connectedness as to what we value.

"A Place at the Table," conceived by Karen S., explored the idea of inclusion. As people of faith, we are charged with loving and serving one another. The reality is that many of our participants are left out, feared,

avoided, and ignored. Plates made by Odyssey members and senior Belmont art students depicted much about the personal pain of addiction and the individual's struggle to recover; thereby ensuring his "place at the table" which can be symbolic of regaining his place in society and also his place within the family from whom he may be estranged. Community artists were also encouraged to contribute an artistic plate which depicted the theme.

Art is a never ending source of knowledge and inspiration. Lately, the men in Odyssey completed two new pieces; one is of the angel Gabriel who blows his trumpet not in judgment but in joy. Positive words to bless the world are emitted from his horn. We decided to paint him as an "angel of color" in honor of the people of color whom we serve.

Another new and completed piece is of the façade of a building. It is taken from a photograph of Marathon Village on Jo Johnson Street. One side of the façade is in ruin. This symbolized addiction and the ruin it has brought to many lives. The other part of the façade is in the process of repair which symbolizes our attempts to recover. The messages written in the clouds and in the grasses tell about the artists' journey of recovery.

I work with people. I have titles for myself. I call myself "teachable," "appreciated," and "grateful." My brother calls himself "loved," "respected," and "welcomed" here at Room In The Inn. Martin Luther King, Jr. said we fear that which we do not know. When we fear we hold onto our stereotypes. When we start to "know" about something, homelessness, addiction, mental illness, the labels are removed. We connect human to human in our pain and joy; in our strengths and weaknesses. And so begins the journey of exchange. Can the helper exist without the helpee?

Building Up People—Building Hearts & Homes

by Maggie J.

“Everyday we are called to small things with great love.” - Mother Teresa

This is a quote that I have hanging in close sight of my desk, in order to help me keep my work at the Campus in perspective and remind me of the potential to produce extraordinary results.

With all that being said, what I really want to write about is people. I love it when I hear someone say, “We do people-work, not paper-work,” because that is the perfect way to describe Room In The Inn. Yes, we keep statistics, but as anyone can tell you, that is not our forte. We have learned to celebrate small victories such as someone finding a job, getting his or her birth certificate after many months of waiting, or better yet, someone who is celebrating a sober anniversary or housing approval. For those who have had a past history of let downs in their lives, we try to celebrate anything that can be celebrated!

Since I began working as Social Services Coordinator, I have had the amazing opportunity to help folks connect with disability advocacy agencies and begin their quest for affordable housing. For many, this is a long track. Through all of the community relationships that our staff has formed, we have now been able to help 25 people navigate this journey since May. Since I enjoy stories, not stats, would you mind if I share a few with you? Wiley first came to us for assistance through pre-Odyssey, but upon finding he had no history of alcohol or drug abuse, he just wasn't the best match for the program. As we do with anyone who isn't an appropriate fit for Odyssey, he was sent to work with me on developing his own personal track. After months of daily meetings, hospital scares, and bad luck, he has since been approved for Social Security disability benefits, has moved into Nashville Christian Towers and has bought himself a new

set of wheels! He comes by to visit every once in a while to have me help him make sense of his mail and to let me know just how happy he is.

Kenny is another reason to show that “people-work” is what it's all about. Kenny has been a Nashvillian for well over 20 years and has been gracing Broadway & West End with his musical talent since day one. Since getting to know Kenny, he was awarded Social Security benefits, acquired housing at Chippington Towers, and recently went home to visit his family in east Tennessee. He came by the Campus to visit one day after that trip and shared his family photo album with us. He was so proud of his family, naming each one of them and their occupations. It was hard to believe that this gentleman, who used to alternate between yelling at us on a daily basis and not talking to us at all, would come share one of his most prized possessions. I believe God was in that moment.

The third and final story I would like to share is about a man named Willie. I met Willie one hectic afternoon in the alley beside our building. I had never seen Willie at Room In The Inn, but noticed that he had come to pick up his mail and Social Security check. As we walked hurriedly down the alley towards the clinic, I introduced myself and asked if he would allow me to help him search for some affordable housing in the coming week. He agreed and promised to come see me. After a week or two, Willie finally came and we began discussing his situation. Willie had worked at the McDonald's near Centennial Park for over 20 years. A series of unfortunate events and some serious medical problems led to his recently becoming homeless. Since Willie was elderly and had no criminal history, he was soon accepted at Hickory Hollow Towers and quickly began a new life. He became very active in his new community as well. He began assisting the ladies in the office whenever a resident moved out, and this eventually led to a paid position.

He now also helps organize their community picnics and events as well. Since Hickory Hollow Towers is not far from my home, I have even had the privilege of seeing Willie out at the grocery store and Walmart on occasion. It made me very proud to see such a sweet, older man get settled into a place where he can not just reside, but actually live.

I have come to realize that these huge life changes are scary for the homeless, just as they are for us. I remember how excited I was when I bought my first house, but I was also scared out of my mind wondering how I was going to manage it all. For these men and women it may be the first time they have had housing or an income in years. Moving into a new apartment may bring on feelings of loneliness and apprehension. That is why, with all of

Building Relationships

by Sara V.

Here at Room in the Inn's Campus, we are not just building a new building, we are continually building relationships and that takes a lot of faith and persistence. Relationships are actually our biggest investment around here. With all of the focus on the actual bricks and cement physical building going up in what used to be our parking lot, it is easy to forget that we must continue to invest in those relationships.

Sometimes it is hard to make that investment – especially with someone who may not be too interested in building that relationship with you. So why should we try?

Investing in relationships is important for various reasons. Most people have a need to be loved and accepted by other people. Even in this age of less personal, more computerized ways of communicating, there is nothing like having a sincere, trusting relationship with another person. How many times have you been on the phone with a computer, only to wish that you could talk to a real person? Investing

life's overwhelming feelings in place, we try to stay focused on the people.

You know, it is sort of a bittersweet feeling when someone moves into housing. After spending months, and sometimes years, with a person, it is a mixed bag of emotions once they leave. I imagine it is kind of like a child that is going off to college for the first time. You wonder if they're going to be ok and if they are going to make the right decisions. You miss them and worry that they are safe and happy. At the end of the day you find peace in knowing that you did all that you could and you must let go and let them make decisions for themselves. The hope that we cling to here at the Campus is knowing that they will always find their way home. Please help me to remember to invest wisely in the lives of others.

in relationships is also valuable because you never know when you might make a difference in someone's life and see a great return on your investment. It is not always an easy process though.

That is where faith comes in. It can be hard to find that faith sometimes, but without faith, where would we be? If no one had any faith in themselves or others, mountains would not get climbed, diseases would not get cured, and peace would never happen. If someone had not had faith in me, I would not have started working here at the Campus. If no one had any faith in people who suffer with alcoholism, there would be far fewer people in recovery.

So, when thinking about the return on your investments and how you want to invest your time and energy, don't forget about the investments you can make in your fellow human beings and have a little faith in people – you never know when someone might make a difference in your life.

Random Acts of Kindness

As an agency that receives so much from the community, our reaching out to others only seems natural. On a regular basis Room In The Inn creates small groups from the VA and Odyssey programs as well as the general population to help with our 'giving back program.' Over the past few months, we have taken these occasions to get 'down and dirty' as we reach outside ourselves and into the community.

March presented an opportunity to participate in Walk In Their Shoes, sponsored by the Sexual Assault Center, which takes the tough subject of sexual assault and turns it into an uplifting community event. There were presentations from those affected by sexual assault and those who dedicate their lives to healing and preventing violence. Men from our Odyssey program volunteered as "crossing guards" to help direct walkers.

In April our first "official" Random Act of Kindness was creating toiletry bags for victims of the Murfreesboro tornados. What an opportunity for us to pay it forward! Later in the month Second Harvest Food Bank was our first site to visit. A group of 15 piled into vans and made a trek across the city to sort foods that other groups in the community had generously donated. We sorted, and sorted, and sorted for two hours...more than 2,000 pounds of frozen meat, chicken and fish were put in their proper places. We left the freezer knowing

we had made a difference...maybe even setting a record for sorting the most in a shortest amount of time!

June brought another opportunity to make a difference. This time we journeyed down the street to Siloam Family Health Center, where those without health insurance are taken care of by some of Nashville's finest medical providers. Siloam is even one of our community partners, as the providers of medical care for our Odyssey participants. After a tour of the clinic, we promptly took our stations to create new patient charts, dust and clean light fixtures...and other random acts of kindnesses. What a sense satisfaction to know we were making a difference to the staff as well as the patients who walk through their doors.

In August we were off to Ashland City to one of the area's best kept secrets—Penuel Ridge Retreat Center. Pulling areas of overgrown summer weeds and sorting recyclables were targets *du jour*. Our gloved hands, dirty clothes and soon-to-be whelps of poison ivy were obvious signs that we had helped preserve nature.

Actually, these "random acts" were not random at all...but were intentional opportunities of kindness. Thank you to those of you who have reached outside of yourselves and into the Room In The Inn community. Our hope is that our ways of saying thanks have also impacted lives...maybe some of whom we will never know we made a difference.

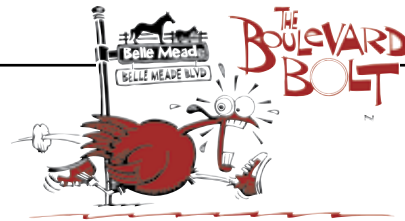
RITI Named 2009 Neighborhood Builder

As part of the 2009 Neighborhood Excellence Initiative, Bank of America has selected Room In The Inn's Campus for Human Development as an award recipient. This award is given as a commitment to the growth and vitality of our agency by providing \$200,000 in core operating support as well as leadership training.

The Bank of America Neighborhood Excellence Initiative is designed

to recognize, nurture and reward organizations, local heroes, and student leaders who are helping their neighborhoods achieve excellence.

Room In The Inn feels very blessed to have community leaders recognize the need for the services we provide and also that they recognize expansion is a necessary undertaking during these turbulent times.



Support the Bolt, Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 26
See <http://BoulevardBolt.org>



Odyssey volunteers at Second Harvest

Notecards from the Edge of Night

by Lisa H.

I chose to connect with Room In The Inn because it's made me stop and think about things that might seem obvious, but mean much more under the surface.

My attraction to nightscape photography, which often draws me out of my comfort-able house, seems to be a search for visual treasure in an unnatural setting. Beauty can be found almost anywhere but capturing light where there is little of it to begin with is a challenge. There are physical demands too, and as with any art form they can hinder the process but also make it richer. To experience a cool, rainy night in downtown Nashville, camera and umbrella in hand, may be mildly stressful but also awakening—the act of carrying a camera in the first place tends to make us look and notice. But this awareness becomes rather more meaningful when it makes us think of people who spend full nights facing the elements. It is really hard to ignore.

Having carefully avoided the dark as a child I choose to explore it now and find so compelling and hopeful any light



that emerges from it. When I started this series I wanted to acknowledge the men and women who bravely face the night on the streets I photograph. Then I found out about Room In The Inn. Your staff and volunteers are open and respectful to the ones you serve and I'd like more Nashvillians to know about your efforts. Lisa's work is at www.nashvillenightsapes.com

Lisa donates a portion of proceeds from the sale of her cards to Room In The Inn.