House of Mercy
TRANSFORMING LIVES

MESSAGES OF CARE

Community • Advocacy • Resolve • Empower

Fall/Winter 2023



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#EndHIV #EndStigma
#EndDiscrimination
#EndHealthDisparities
#EndRacism

On a Journey to Self-Discovery

Resident Finding a Meaningful Approach to Life

Jason's life began with the untimely loss of his father, a heartbreaking event that forced him to mature far earlier than his peers. Yet, life had more trials in store for Jason. The entry of an abusive stepfather, coupled with the weight of his father's absence, tested his resilience further. He found solace in his career in the catering industry, a profession that allowed him to channel his energy into something productive and fulfilling. His culinary journey led him to Philadelphia, a city that became both a canvas for his ambitions and a backdrop for a new chapter of his life. Jason's dedication and tireless work ethic propelled him into a successful role as a corporate store opener, a job that had him opening stores up and down the bustling East Coast. He was living the dream he had crafted for himself, relishing the hustle and bustle of the professional world. However, life's unpredictable twists were not yet done, he received news of a family member falling seriously ill.

His compassionate nature compelled him to relocate to Charlotte, where he could provide support and care during their time of need. This transition introduced him to a partner, and their decade-long relationship seemed like a beacon of stability and happiness. However, life threw another curveball when Jason discovered his partner's infidelity, leading to a heart-wrenching betrayal that brought an unexpected consequence: Jason was diagnosed with HIV. Unbeknownst to him, he had been living with HIV for nearly a decade.

The revelation came amidst a battle with Pneumocystis pneumonia, a harsh reminder of the vulnerability that life can impose. The diagnosis rocked Jason's emotional foundation, and he grappled with a mix of sadness, fear, and uncertainty. The transition from an active and ambitious lifestyle to one confined by illness proved to be the most challenging obstacle for Jason. During this time, He acknowledged that his self-worth wasn't contingent upon the opinions of others. He confronted past prejudices he may have held and sought forgiveness from friends living with HIV. Furthermore, he found strength in openly sharing his diagnosis with friends and family, despite the fear of rejection. By doing so, he not only "stripped HIV of its power but also became an advocate for self-acceptance and understanding."

Jason then encountered House of Mercy, a haven that would play a profound role in his healing journey. For the first time, Jason found himself in an environment where his health took precedence over his work. House of Mercy provided a safe space, both physically and emotionally, for him to focus on his well-being. Jason realized that true success lay not just in career accomplishments, but in self-care and inner balance. House of Mercy became his sanctuary, a place where he could rebuild his health and regain his strength. While working through the storm of his own health challenges, Jason feels a deep-seated desire to give back, to be a guiding light for others navigating the complexities of their own health journeys. He realizes that he wants to be a peer counselor, a source of support and inspiration for individuals who, like him, face the daunting reality of an HIV/AIDS diagnosis.

Through his own experiences, Jason understood the power of empathy, the importance of self-love, and the profound impact of having a supportive community. He wants to be a voice of reassurance, a beacon of hope, and a testament to the fact that a diagnosis does not define one's worth or potential. As he continues to focus on his health and get back into the workforce, he recognizes he is a testament to resilience. He has found the capacity of the human spirit to find purpose even in the darkest of times. With House of Mercy as a backdrop and a catalyst for change, Jason's narrative evolved to a broader tale of self-discovery, healing, and a passionate dedication to helping others find their own paths to wellness and empowerment.

A Bible verse Jason used to describe his first few days at House of Mercy.

"Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path." (Psalms 119: 105) NIV

Your generosity can truly make a significant impact in the lives of individuals like Jason. Your contributions enable us to provide vital support and empower those in need. By donating, you're not just giving money; you're giving hope, opportunities, and a chance for a better future.

Click HERE to Donate!

To determine your status, the essential step is to undergo testing. Explore additional information about HIV testing from the CDC by clicking HERE.

Mercy Day at House of Mercy



We gathered to celebrate Mercy Day, observed on September 24th at House of Mercy. Sister Carmelita guided us in reflecting on the remarkable life of Sister Catherine McAuley, a shining example of compassion and mercy. Our commitment is to carry forward her legacy, working to uplift and empower the lives of those we touch.

WELCOME OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER



SUSAN DOLPHIN

From dedicating over 30 years to a fulfilling career in social work, Sue has gained a diverse experience working with various communities and clients. Her roles have included coordinating federal grant renewals for Ryan White funds in Iowa and addressing barriers for vulnerable individuals. She's served as a therapist in both North and South Carolina. This includes notably at the Veterans Administration clinic, and actively contributed to the field as a co-chairperson for the National Association of Social Workers-North Carolina (NASW-NC). For nearly three decades, Sue has identified as LGBTQ and found support in Catholic communities. Sue looks forward to bringing her wealth of experience and perspective.

Join us in welcoming Susan as a new member of our Board of Directors!

Looking to join our Board of Directors? Click HERE to get more information and apply by clicking "JOIN US"

A Message from the President & CEO

Dear Friends of House of Mercy,

Joy is a feeling that arises from gratitude. It can manifest as a burst of laughter when someone achieves a personal breakthrough, a soft smile when receiving an unexpected gift, or a moment of silence when reflecting on a dream from the past unfolding before you. It's also the moment when two people connect through their eyes, and judgment fades away. Joy is like a bouquet, carefully picked and arranged. It's the feeling of finally coming home. Joy is glorious and proud, and it abounds.

As I look back on my experience attending the United States Conference on HIV/AIDS, I am reminded of the importance of celebrating achievements in our own lives and of those we love and support. This year's conference was a tribute to Black women for their outstanding contribution to the fight against HIV. For a full week, we listened to the stories of those on the front lines of breaking down barriers, bringing hope, and facilitating some of the most incredible advances in treatment options available today. It felt wonderful to return to House of Mercy, where we have recently updated our business model to help more people on their journey toward permanent housing and an improved quality of life. Our PALM program has already assisted six people in the last three months. We have also added social workers to the team, increased our outreach, added Spanish language services, and we are all learning more about trauma-informed care and domestic violence as we seek to provide wrap-around services.

There is a buzz around House of Mercy as residents actively develop and implement plans to gain stable housing and achieve their goals.

Please follow us on social media to learn more about our accomplishments as we uplift and celebrate the personal milestones that our clients are reaching. Volunteers are always welcome, and we have redesigned our Volunteer Program to include new opportunities. Your contributions of talent, time, and treasure are essential to building a community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Your continued support of House of Mercy through prayer, financial contributions, volunteering, and connecting us to other resources in the community for the benefit of our residents is needed.

Please consider donating to House of Mercy today.

Click HERE to support our cause.

- Latoya Gardner, President & CEO
House of Mercy

New Faces at House of Mercy



Wanda Merriweather
Director of Programs & Case Management



Deidra Calloway
Director of Development & Communications



Peytan Medlock
Communications & Development Associate



Axel Colmenares
Office Administrative Supervisor

Upcoming Events - Get Involved with House of Mercy !

Giving Tuesday | *November 28, 2023*

Join the global movement to give, collaborate and celebrate generosity on Giving Tuesday. To donate, Click HERE!

Let's work together to make meaningful change!

World AIDS Day Breakfast | *December 1, 2023*

Join us on this 35th annual World AIDS Day for our World AIDS Day Breakfast!

Taking place December 1st from 8am to 10am at the Mercy Heritage Center.

Let's empower, unite, and spread hope!

Registration is FREE and closes on November 15th. To get more details & register....
Click the flyer to the right, scan the QR code, or call (704) 825-4711 ext. 6

Will you join us to make a difference?





Sister Carmelita Hagan, RSM
Pastoral Support

WELCOMING BACK VOLUNTEERS

"I would say that volunteers are vital to the success of nonprofits and other organizations. They make a significant contribution to the betterment of society. House of Mercy has been blessed with wonderful volunteers since its beginning in 1991. During the pandemic, we had to eliminate having volunteers due to health reasons. I am happy to say that we are looking forward to having, hopefully, some of our past volunteers back with us and some new ones to assist with the many areas of assistance that would enrich the lives of our residents."

Click HERE to get started volunteering!