

Fall Greetings

from our house to yours!



October/November 2013

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A MESSAGE FROM MAUREEN

It's been a few months since you've heard from us at Angela House, but that is not for lack of hard work and exciting new possibilities for the future of our beloved organization. As always, our mission of serving Houston-area women and putting them on the path for lifelong success following incarceration is at the forefront of our daily efforts at Angela House. It is with great excitement that I share with you our news: we're officially moving! Angela House is currently in the process of transitioning into the former Carmelite Priory at 6725 Reed Road in East Houston, adjacent to Cristo Rey Jesuit College Preparatory School. We hope to be fully in by late November.

The new facilities mean expansion to the quality and depth of the services we can provide, and will bring us closer to providers many of our women require to move their lives forward, including transportation, job training and medical care. The new building is in need of upgrades and repairs, issues we've been managing these past few months, but our professional staff and volunteers will now be blessed with ample space to carry out our mission and support these deserving women.

I am thrilled that after many years of working with the space and opportunities we embraced gratefully, Angela House now has the chance to see our vision truly soar. To have our administrative space, meeting space, residential living, a real kitchen, and true grounds for the very first time on one campus is an absolute blessing.

Thank you for your continued faith and partnership, and for walking with us in this journey of hope and opportunity. We are moved by your generosity and kindness as we prepare for our new address, and know you will celebrate with us as we open our new doors for the first time.

-Maureen O'Connell, OP, Executive Director



ANGELA HOUSE PLANS NOVEMBER MOVE TO NEW REED ROAD LOCATION

Angela House, a non-profit transitional-residential facility dedicated to giving formerly incarcerated women an opportunity for lifelong success, is taking on the next milestone in their mission with a move across the city to Reed Road in Houston's east side in November. The former Carmelite priory adjacent to Cristo Rey Jesuit College Preparatory School will now serve the organization's administrative, meeting, residential and additional needs on one campus for the very first time. "We won't see an increase in residents with our move, but we will see an increase in the excellence of services we provide to our women," Executive Director Maureen O'Connell said.

New heating, air conditioning, plumbing and an upgraded electrical system brought the space to code and spurred the fall move-in date. The property, made possible through the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, is a dream-come-true for the eleven-year-old organization. "Can I tell you what a dream it is to have a real kitchen? To have our programs really have room to grow and breathe in the space we can provide them?" O'Connell said. "This is an amazing opportunity for us and a great leap forward for our mission at Angela House."



JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

After working with her daughter on a Duchesne Academy service project at Angela House, certified life/job coach and attorney Juliana Ashley felt called to help residents transition into a work-ready professional mode. "I was moved by the women and their stories and am somewhat embarrassed to say that for the first time I realized these women were intelligent and capable, and not unlike myself. It seemed they had just made some bad choices or lacked the support system that most of us are blessed to have," Ashley said.

Through JS101, a non-profit program designed to provide free job search help to the general public, Ashley and her colleague Jackie Verity continue to provide job training, skill building and other support to put women on the path for professional success. "Through the JS101 classes, we help them understand that they have something to offer and that they have skills that are valuable to employers. We teach them how to identify those skills, how to talk about them to a potential employer and how to find jobs where they can thrive and create stability," Ashley said.

JS101 classes at Angela House help residents build confidence, set goals and work toward creating a future where they can support themselves, as well as contribute to others and society. Specifically, job-training classes at Angela House show women how to find and apply for jobs as well as identify their skill set, write a resume and interview for jobs. Counselors also help them address issues related to their past. Residents learn how to answer questions about their criminal history in a job interview and on a job application.

"Our coaches feel blessed that through JS101 and our job search programs, we are able to partner with organizations like Angela House and contribute to the success of their residents," Ashley said. "I am so inspired by what Angela House provides to these women with the guidance and support they need to turn their lives around and successfully transition into society."

To find out more about JS101's free job search classes, go to www.js101.org.

www.angelahouse.org



ANGELA HOUSE PLAYERS

The fall season for Angela House Players began Sept. 18 and continues every Wednesday afternoon with classes centered on learning and building creative expression. "Our first week we started class with a discussion about what qualities makes a capable speaker or performer, including eye contact, volume, preparation, and we went on to experiment with a variety of theatrical games and exercises enhancing eye contact and facial expression," said Diane Andrews, AH Players director. The group practiced duet mirroring and using music to enhance creativity. The second week of AH Players was centered on exercises based on concentration and expression, and added props to boost creative movement, group trust, creativity and plays with abstract ideas. Coming weeks will focus on the importance of understanding body language, as well as spoken lines, characters and believable actions, words, and movement on stage.

AH Players are already planning their Dec. 11 Christmas performance and looking forward to new space at the new Reed Road facility. "I really look forward to the fall move," Andrews said. "I have seen photographs that show a larger space for class and performance. The new space has a stage look about it and that will be exciting for all of us."

Andrews admits participating in the ministry at Angela House isn't always easy, but it is always the right thing to do. Each week, she looks forward to hearing updates regarding residents' jobs, classes, families, and other successes. "It's exciting to watch the women blossom as they slowly work their way back into society," she said. "You can see the light come back into their eyes. I love being one thread in the safety net that Angela House places beneath these women as they take small steps back into society."

PROJECT FOCUSES ON AH GROUNDS

Making the new Angela House campus grounds inviting and enjoyable is the focus of an Eagle Scout Project led by Brett Vaio, a Strake Jesuit College Preparatory junior. Vaio plans to beautify the courtyard and implement a garden. "I am leading volunteers to create a peaceful environment for the women of Angela House. Once I heard they were moving, I knew I could give these women a calm, tranquil, beautiful area in their new home," Vaio said. He plans to finish his project this fall.



IN THE COMMUNITY



WOMEN FOCUS ON HEALTH, WELLNESS

The Healthy and Whole Program, a program started in January through collaboration between Healthcare for the Homeless Houston, Baylor College of Medicine and Angela House, continues this fall with new goals and exciting programming.

The ongoing weekly wellness class concentrates on nutrition, self-care, exercise, smoking cessation and healthy eating on a budget. Residents will soon enjoy a weekly cooking class focusing on healthy eating taught by a local professional chef. Classes are complemented by a walking-based exercise program. Residents walk three times a week accompanied by Baylor and UT medical students who also teach stretching and goal setting.

Residents celebrated their most recent healthy milestone Oct. 12 at the Mental Health Awareness Walk with AH participants wearing matching hot pink t-shirts proclaiming "Angela House – on our way!" The exercise program will receive a huge boost after moving to AH's new location on Reed Road in November. Residents will have access to a fully-equipped exercise room, including an elliptical machine, stationery bicycle and weights through the generosity of the United Way. Jazzercise of West University also donated 65 pairs of athletic shoes for residents to wear during workouts. "I have been amazed at the changes I have seen in the women since the program began," said Dr. Andrea Link, clinical assistant professor in the department of family and community medicine at Baylor College of Medicine and program manager for Healthcare for the Homeless Houston. "I really believe the women are making the connection between good mental health and good physical health. I couldn't be happier with how the program is going thus far and I am so proud of our residents."

CENTERING PRAYER AT ANGELA HOUSE

Centering Prayer continues to be a Sunday mainstay at Angela House, with area deacons meeting with residents in the evening to focus on this form of Christian meditation where participants let go of their thoughts to be aware of God at a deeper level. "Driving home after a meeting, I marvel at the power of God's love in their lives. I see it and hear it in their stories and experiences. They are as much a gift to me and the deacons as we are to them," said Dr. Kim Kehoe, a Rice University business professor.

WELCOME TO CAROLE HUGHES

Angela House welcomed new Office Manager Carole Hughes in September where she provides much-needed support to the AH mission each day. "I'm so happy to be at Angela House and I'm shown every day this is where I need to be," she said. "I look at my own past and I feel as I could have easily been one of these women. I see the residents struggling to reclaim their lives. I understand them and am happy to be part of a team helping them to make good choices and put their lives back on track." Hughes is an important part of the three-person, full-time staff at AH and will spend her time supporting the executive director, executing administrative functions, tracking donations and providing fundraising support, and tackling grant writing. She has associate's degrees in computer information systems and business administration, and a bachelor's degree in business administration from Ithaca College. Prior to joining Angela House, Hughes was the computer science teacher at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic School for two years.



GO GREEN AT ANGELA HOUSE.ORG

Help Angela House go green and stay up with the latest news at Angela House online. Visit our website (www.angelahouse.org) for the latest photos and news, and updates on our residents. Our site is built as an interactive forum for our supporters, contributors and volunteers. We welcome your thoughts and ideas (contact Office Manager Carole Hughes - carolehughes@angelahouse.org). Our online donor link provides an easy way to provide ongoing support of Angela House. As always, we are grateful for your commitment of time and treasure for our residents who are so deserving of another chance at lifelong happiness and success.

Don't forget! While we will continue to mail our newsletter to our dedicated supporters and readers, we'd love to get our e-newsletter to supporters via e-mail. If you have not provided us with your e-mail address yet, it is not too late! We promise not to inundate you with ongoing communication and look forward to sharing our newsletter with you. Please help us save paper and send your e-mail address to us at carolehughes@angelahouse.org.



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SAVE the DATE

Please watch your mailboxes for a special save-the-date invitation! Keep your calendar open for a January 2014 celebration as we dedicate our new facility on Reed Road, and open a new era in serving our mission and expanding our vision for Angela House residents. We hope you can join us as we usher in an exciting new chapter for Angela House in the Houston area.



The mission of
Angela House:

*“To successfully transition
women into
society after incarceration.”*

www.angelahouse.org

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OUR WISH LIST

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- Women's cotton underwear
(Sz. 7,10,& 12)
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- Bathroom Tissue
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THANK YOU!