



What's Happening at Homework House?

Thanks to you, Homework House has started its seventh year and what a start it has been!

More students than ever: over 130! And it's only October as we count! The waiting list includes another twenty at least and increases every week. Can you imagine how hard it is to tell an old friend, ten years old perhaps, that he or she has to wait until we have a chair and a tutor free?

More tutors, new and old, from high school age to our one octogenarian! Once again Smith and Mount Holyoke lead the count with the Elms, Holyoke Community College, Amherst, and UMass doing their share! As of the last count we have 134 tutors and need more!

Melinda Pellerin-Duck, last year a Site Supervisor working for the first time in her life with kindergartners, has graduated to the full-time position of Education Coordinator.

Joanine Carey prepared the way for her in that program and has moved on to Cape Cod. Thanks, Joanine!

Margaret Kenney, ssj, volunteered in the Flats as a tutor last year. This year she has the part-time position of Site Supervisor of the kindergarten and first grade students on the top floor of our Chestnut Street site. How they love her!

Angel Ortiz, who started out with us in that room as a third grader and continued with us through eighth grade, finished Peck Elementary School at the top of his class earned a high flying scholarship to Northfield-Mount Hermon and has left the block at the corner of Sargeant and Chestnut for that serene historic campus where he is earning accolades as a gentleman scholar.

Two Peck School students whom we tutored in our after-school program are filling out applications to follow in Angel's footsteps, including his brother Giovanni.

Dialogue is regular now between Homework House and Peck and Kelly Schools via Melinda and Kathleen



Smith tutor Robyn Handley tells the story of meeting her children their first day. Pages 2-3

Imbruno, Site Supervisor in the Flats. They lead the way in forging ties between classroom teachers and counselors and our Homework House tutors.

Everything at our Guadalupe site has gotten brighter and safer, thanks to the Amelia Peabody and Frank Stanley Beveridge Foundations. We have installed new lighting, windows, and flooring. Rooms on the lower floor that house our program for Grades 4 through 8 are brighter by far.

Our Fifth Birthday Gala and Barbecue

In February and May we celebrated our first five years. We began the extended celebration gathering with old and new friends on an evening when snow freckled the earth and finished it at a barbecue hosting Homework House families on Churchill's streets! The Homework House Board took the lead in planning and hosting the event.

Over two hundred friends and benefactors packed the Yankee Pedlar's elegant "opera house" to celebrate all that has happened since Homework House opened its doors in 2006. To the strains of John Lennon's "Imagine" the fourth-grade artist who designed the logo for the party processed with her family to light the birthday cake. Former and current students and tutors testified at the microphone before the crowd

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of friends and benefactors what Homework House means to them. The crowd's generosity enabled us to start building a rainy-day fund, security for the future.

From the start, the Board wisely planned to bring the five year festivities to the Homework House children and their families. So the first Sunday in May, we hosted a barbecue outside the Guadalupe gym building. We had a fun house, face painting, lots of food, music, the Mayor, and more friends. People joined us from the blocks, the crowd leaving the Spanish Mass, and, of course, our families. No one was happier than the children!

What do we do when school is out?

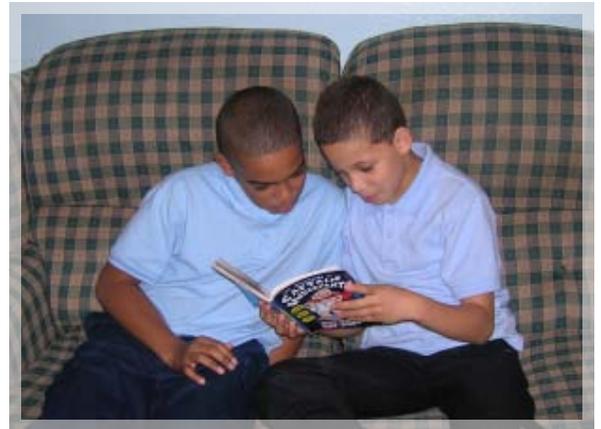
Our 2012 summer programs were grounded in literacy.

For five years the Elms College Education Department has opened its summer reading program with full scholarships for Homework House students. Three years it extended a welcome to the children in Chicopee. Last year and this, the Elms came to our Homework House in the Flats and graduate students Mary Beth, Sharon, and Donna worked ably with fifteen children. Projects on nature, poetry, and the American Revolution kept the children engaged actively for five wonderful weeks. Last week a few of them pleased us no end when they said last week that what they enjoyed the most was being able to take a book home, read it, bring it back the next day, and get another one.

We held our third summer camp for two weeks at our Guadalupe site. Melinda Pellerin-Duck coordinated activities. Summer Olympics featured a parade of the flags of nations and spelling races. Campers went kayaking and wrote haiku. They travelled to Sturbridge Village and the Holyoke library at City Hall. Their only complaint was summer camp is too short. Exhausted after two weeks, counselors reflected the adage of stage directors who teach "leave them wanting more."

From the desk of our Education Coordinator

Juan, a Homework House sixth grader, is one of our "veterans." If you were to visit, he would certainly let you know how smart and experienced he is! Frankie Quinones has worked with Juan and understands the challenges this young man can bring to the "table."



Often he completes assignments early and can be looking for something to do. One day Frankie and I realized that Juan liked to volunteer. He wanted to help out with the "younger kids. That day he got his chance to "pair and share."

Nesmarie is as quiet as Juan is verbal. She is shy and just learning English at school. We instructed Juan to read slowly and deliberately to her, carefully pronouncing each word in her new language. She would repeat the words so that he could grow familiar with her pronunciation patterns.

What a joy it was to see Juan patiently guiding Nesmarie while reading the "Ducklings." We listened as he gently reminded her, "Say it in English, Nesmarie." She often looked puzzled and then slowly began to adapt and understand her new tutor. She began to draw what she read and Juan watched, listened and taught some more.

This is the miracle of children reading, learning, and sharing. Someone like Frankie sees the potential of someone like Juan and one child willing to make a difference sees the potential of someone like Nesmarie. This is Homework House.

Melinda Pellerin-Duck

Through the Eyes of a Tutor

The first time I opened the heavy wooden doors at the top of the Homework House stairs the scene was a bit chaotic. I saw kids—all kindergarten, first, and second graders—excited and nervous. Few tutors had arrived. The Sister in charge looked up with relief when we entered. She told us she really needed someone to work with the two boys in the middle of the room. I volunteered.

I soon discovered I was needed for those two boys because they're experts at discreetly causing chaos. However, over the past semester those two boys have

been teaching me more than they'll ever know. They have taught me that learning may not be easy or fun for everyone, but there are ways to change that conundrum.

They've taught me that a game can be one of the best tools for learning anything. They've taught me that Simon Says is a great game to play while waiting in line for the bathroom. They've taught me that sometimes it's okay to feel like you've been a little mean because you earn respect by not giving in.

They've taught me that being silly can go hand in hand with learning. They've taught me that pretending you can't be found while hiding under a pile of pillows never gets old. They've taught me not to stay on one subject for too long. And finally, they've taught me that what everyone needs once in a while, some more than others, is just a smile, some encouragement, and a fist bump.



Robyn Handley
Smith College

A Season of Fun and Fund Raising: Save these dates

NOVEMBER 29—SOUTH HADLEY VILLAGE COMMONS hosts its third annual sales to benefit Homework House. Get 10% off all purchases at Arts Unlimited Gifts, Autentica Mexican Restaurant, Crazy Moon Fashion Company, Arts Unlimited, and Underlings and the establishment will donate an additional 10% to Homework House. Enjoy the wine and cheese reception in the evening hours at Crazy Moon.

12/12/12—VALLEYGIVES DAY gives you an opportunity via FaceBook, Twitter, Razoo social networking to give a minimum of \$10, or as much as you like, to Homework House and you open the door to thousands of dollars in incentives to us, your favorite nonprofit. Watch the media for updates.

DECEMBER 20, 21, or 22—Eat at Ruby Tuesdays at the Ingleside Mall and 20% of your tab will be sent to Homework House. Don't forget the flyer we happily will e-mail or send to you. You need that in hand for us to qualify for the 20% donation.

APRIL 4—We will have our second gala at the Yankee Pedlar. Keep your eyes open for more news and save the date!

In this Thanksgiving Season 2012 we remember our benefactors—

Amelia Peabody Foundation

Annual Catholic Appeal

Beveridge Family Foundation

Catholic Campaign for Human Development

Chicopee Savings Bank

General Electric Fund for Public Schools

Hampden Bank

Holyoke Community Development Block Grant

Holyoke Cultural Council

Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation

John Bickford Foundation

Mount Pleasant Fund

PeoplesBank Community Outreach Program

Ronald McDonald House Charities

Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange Fund

Springfield Sisters of St. Joseph Apostolic Ministry Fund

Susan A. and Donald P. Babson Charitable Foundation

United Way of Pioneer Valley.

We remember the friends and families of Judith Brady and Dona Kane who in a time of mourning sent us memorial donations.

We thank William F. Sullivan & Co., Inc., and the entire Sullivan family who presented us with a check for \$3500 at their Sixtieth Anniversary Celebration.

We thank Blessed Sacrament School, Holyoke Catholic High School, Holyoke Community College, Saint Mary's Elementary School in Westfield, Saint Michael's Parish in East Longmeadow, and the Girls' and Women's Club of Glen Ridge, New Jersey, for their generous collections, especially at this time of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

And we thank every one of you, our good friends, and we ask you, in your kindness, to let us know if we may have overlooked any act of generosity.

giving children at risk a loving and caring environment





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MISSION STATEMENT

Homework House provides free tutoring and mentoring for children who are at risk for academic failure and dropping out of school. We give children a loving and caring environment. We help them improve their literacy skills so they can become productive members of our community. We work towards rekindling their interest in learning and self-improvement – one page at a time. Services are provided to school-age children without regard to race, religion, ethnicity or gender.

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