

HOMework HOUSE

Fall, 2009

Tutoring one child at a time



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.

Homework House Holyoke

Five years ago at this time, Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield Maureen Broughan and Jane Morrissey were returning from a visit to Homework House California with a dream for inner-city Holyoke, Massachusetts. Early the next year, they opened their first after-school site at Immaculate Conception Parish House in the Flats to two students and two tutors. From this humble beginning, Homework House has grown to serve well over a hundred students with a greater number of adult and young adult volunteer tutors from area high schools and colleges. Their Board has taken the lead in stirring

individual and corporate support. Foundations have given generously. This year the program boasts three Learning Centers in the Flats and Churchill neighborhoods at two sites with literally hundreds involved in services offered and no-one so committed to learning as the Homework House children and their families. Thank you. Even in these hard economic times, you keep building this dream. Thank you.

VOLUME 2, COPY 2

Quotes:



Love tutoring my student!



Homework House is a part of me.



When we do homework, it amazes me how much he has learned.



The new Homework House sign looks so cool.

New Additions to Guadalupe, Site 2

With your help in matching a grant from the Amelia Peabody Foundation, last year we replaced the roof and did related internal repairs. Then with a grant from the Beveridge Foundation, we did asbestos abatement on the bottom floor of the building where we now have two large rooms to accommodate the growing numbers of students coming daily to Homework House. With that grant and Church support, we were also able to pull up the old linoleum and refinish the floors in the two large rooms that now house our 1st through 4th graders. We added new bulletin boards around the rooms as well as new white boards.

Other changes include:

- Opening the new learning

center at Guadalupe for 5th, 6th, and 7th graders, so now we have separate HH space on separate floors for middle and elementary school students;

- Installing internet connection in both sites;
- Purchasing a new reading loft, a memorial gift purchased with donations from family and friends of 11-year-old Donesha Lynch who died in May of this year;
- Hosting a supplementary arts program which features collaboration with Holyoke's Enchanted Circle Theater;
- Continuing to evaluate our program so that we have real data on student progress.



"It is so much fun to read my book in the new reading loft"

OctoberFiesta



"OctoberFiesta was not only a great night, it was a beautiful feeling."

On October 21, Homework House had its first annual fundraising activity—an evening of fun, food, and friendship. It took place at Our Lady of Guadalupe Gym Building, 340 Chestnut Street, Holyoke, with Open House and tours from 4 to 5 PM and wine and hors d'oeuvres from 5 to 7PM. It was a great night mingling with friends, parents, teachers, local politicians, and supporters. The successful silent auction featured fine arts and crafts, sports memorabilia, hand crafted items, gift cards from local businesses, days on the Cape, on-air radio time, and many more gifts. Thanks to the hard work of committed board members, it was a successful and memorable evening.

Staffing :

Andrew Melendez of the Elms College has returned as our Outreach Director and Site Supervisor for our Guadalupe Site. New to our staff this year are **Paola Tineo** of Smith College, who is supervising grades 5 through 7 at site 2, and **Sr. Maureen Kervick** from Elms College, who is supervising site 1 at Immaculate Conception Parish Center. These site supervisors oversee the adult tutors and those from local colleges—Elms, Smith, Holyoke Community, Mount Holyoke, Amherst, UMass, Hampshire, and High Schools—Holyoke, St. Mary, and Holyoke Catholic, as they work with close to 120 students. For the first time we have an AmeriCorps worker, **Jackie Diaz**, working full time with us. Her position is sponsored through TechMissionCorps from the Boston area. **Srs. Maureen Broughan and Jane Morrissey, ssj**, continue their work as co-founders and co-directors.

Annual Report of Donors

We are supported by Annual Catholic Appeal, Campaign for Human Development-Diocese of Springfield; Community Development Block Grant; Sisters of St. Joseph Ministry Fund; John Bickford Foundation; Davis Family Foundation; Conrad Hilton Fund; Project Bread; Christian Brothers Foundation; Olivia's Organics; Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange Fund; Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet; Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts; Amelia Peabody Foundation; Beveridge Family Foundation; PeoplesBank Community Outreach Program; Chicopee Savings Bank Charitable Foundation; United Bank Foundation; Hampden Bank Charitable Foundation; and all our benefactors

TUTORING AT HOMEWORK HOUSE

In a little more than a month of tutoring, I've begun to look forward to my afternoons with Wandelee, an eight-year old second grader with wide and ready smile. She has a great and willing attitude, and there is little discussion about her having or getting down to homework, though she is not beyond the lure of the electric pencil sharpener and hunger for the daily snack and drink!

Usually, she has daily homework in spelling from rewriting the 10 or 11 words four times each to using each in a sentence. We talk about spelling rules, check for beginning sentences with capital letters and ending with appropriate punctuation, and we practice the words "spelling bee" fashion. Then we move on to math, often a worksheet practicing basic addition or subtraction both in numerical and word problems. We drill with flash cards, though she likes to insist I have to do the stack as well. Wandelee is very proud to earn her pile of cards for her correct answers!

Next, it's time for reading. Wandelee enjoys selecting a book from the bookcases to read to me. Berenstain Bears and Mercer Meyer remain favorites. I had thought perhaps they were too easy for her; but I have realized that she truly enjoys the confidence of reading these well *and* she has even pointed out (no prompting) her spelling words within the books (e.g., didn't, we'll, I'll, she's, turn, etc). What more could you ask! The Vanishing Pumpkin with wonderful illustrations by Tomie dePaola was a fun Halloween read where Wandelee, another student, and I took turns reading the parts of different characters, and *rapscaillon* was the fun new word, generating more BIG grins from both students.

Writing on the new white boards is a MAJOR attraction to many of the students. Wandelee especially likes to do math or play hangman with the colorful markers at the board. When the board is occupied, we've begun a new "game" of addition with a set of colorful and multi-shaped die where she begins by rolling two die and writing up the problem and answer (terrific repetition with a fun twist). Within the 10 or so minutes of this game, she quickly asks for another dice to add, and she now does problems with 5 die with real enthusiasm resulting in sums in the 40s or 50s. This is designated her "very favorite" game this week.

During snack time, it's my turn to read to her—a chapter or two from a longer book. It is still sometimes a challenge (giving up all those illustrations), but we're working on recall and anticipating what might come next. We're just a chapter away from finishing our first little book. Sometimes she'll work on a puzzle while I read aloud. It's amazing how quickly the afternoon goes by, and the many smiles I see around me make it happy as well.

By MaryKate Cavanaugh