



Fall 2008

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Dear Friends,

If we ever needed help believing that “hope works,” the presidential election of 2008 is proof positive. It is inspiring to learn how willing Americans are to make dramatic changes in leadership based upon hope.

The services and insights provided by **HopeWorks** are needed more now than ever. The challenges families face are often compounded by unemployment, devastating illness, homelessness and mental health issues. Still young people must prepare for their own futures and focus on learning, planning and juggling multiple responsibilities. When they feel overwhelmed, **HopeWorks** is here. We are here because of you, who give generously to make our existence possible. The donor list included in this newsletter is a testament to the kindness of many.

We have learned that therapy is often effective in a crisis. People are most willing to change their behavior when they are suffering and believe that doing the same thing will only deepen their despair. This is the “gift of desperation.” Through the process of counseling, individuals and families are given the gift of considered and supported redirection. They discover external and internal resources that give them hope.

When we take family histories during counseling, there are nuggets that reveal the courage, talent, hard work and hardship of the past generations. These histories can help to put into perspective current challenges and deepen our commitment to working through the problems successfully. We all seek to make the future even brighter.

May your holiday season be blessed with hope, gratitude and peace.

Thank you very much for your support,

Cruger Johnson Phillips
Executive Director

Profile in Hope



Scott is an attorney and longtime resident of West Hartford. A tireless community activist as both a parent and coach, he is the founder of the West Hartford Little League and a co-founder of The Grounds.

What gives you hope?

“As the co-founder of The Grounds, a safe, drug, tobacco and alcohol-free place for West Hartford high school students to hang with their friends on a weekend evening, I am encouraged and touched deeply by the tremendous participation and acceptance of our program by our high school students. After operating The Grounds for over 2 years and having an average attendance of over 200 students at our events, without incident, I am hopeful that the next generation of high school students passing through our gates will prove to be active contributors to our society and serious players on the world stage.”



More Signs of Hope: Works of Heart

A small group of upper classmen at Hall High School, concerned about the growing rate of depression among their peers, have created a student-run organization to promote kindness called *Works of Heart*. Their plans are inspiring and include appearing on the January **HopeWorks** TV show; holding an all school assembly in February; and promoting “Random Acts of Kindness” throughout the school year. They fully understand the need to engage younger students for the group to thrive and be sustained into the future. As an organization that seeks to promote kindness in the community, **HopeWorks** looks forward to collaborating with these outstanding students.



HOPEWORKS TV SHOW

WE ARE IN THE THIRD YEAR OF OUR TELEVISION SHOW AND HAVE BEEN DELIGHTED WITH THE RESPONSE AND QUALITY OF CONVERSATION OUR SHOW HAS GENERATED. THIS FALL WE PRODUCED A FOUR-PART SERIES ON “**UNDERSTANDING GIRL-TO-GIRL AGGRESSION.**” IN EARLY 2009 WE WILL BE CREATING A MULTI-PART DISCUSSION SERIES ABOUT “**GROWING UP IN A DIVERSE WEST HARTFORD.**” STAY TUNED IN!

FOR WEST HARTFORD RESIDENTS WE ARE ON CABLE AT CHANNEL 5.

Meditations on Change

by Elan Wischkin

At **HopeWorks**, we provide hope and help to young people and their families. At the core of this mission is a message of positive change. For the past thirty-six years, **HopeWorks** has supported West Hartford residents in their pursuit of growth through individual and family counseling, group work, and community education. This year we embarked on a new outreach at Hall and Conard High Schools, meeting with teens during their In-School-Suspension (ISS).

What began as a simple idea is now blossoming into a meaningful program. The students in ISS are there for, among other reasons, skipping class, being late repeatedly to school, getting into fights, and arguing with teachers. For one hour, we listen to their stories, opinions, feelings, and excuses. By giving them the freedom to express themselves in a non-threatening environment, they are more willing to accept the new perspectives we offer. While one hour may not seem like much time to create lasting change, we plant seeds for a new outlook and more options.

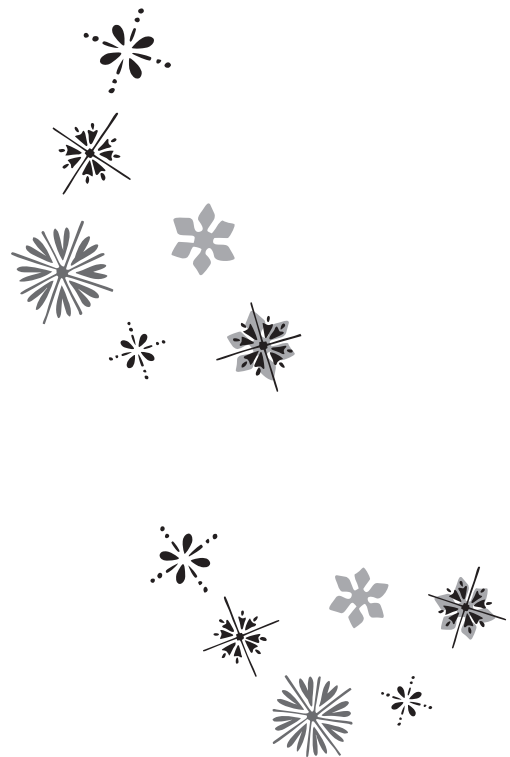
Working with the students in ISS has been a very rewarding experience. As a young adult moving into the field of social work, I was at first timid about working with this population; they can be rough and unforgiving. However, while interacting with these students, I have come to realize that they are great kids with untapped potential. After each session I am left amazed by their insight and mature understanding of life. I think we all forget how stressful high school can be, especially now when expectations for our children are so high.

So what did one student in ISS think about change?
“I think it takes time, and normally people don’t

change unless there’s some type of trauma. Otherwise they just keep doing what they’re doing because there’s no point in changing.”

Many of the students in ISS are at a critical juncture. The majority of them belong to minority populations who often complain of feeling singled out. It reaches a point where they start to see themselves as the “bad kids” and begin acting as such. This has inspired me to focus the second half of my internship on looking at and understanding the issues of diversity as it impacts teens and families in West Hartford. We need to determine what can be done to provide our diverse community with sustaining reasons for hope.

Elan Wischkin is a first year Master’s in Social Work student at the University of Connecticut with an emphasis on community organization.



We are looking forward with great anticipation to the upcoming 10th Annual Mayor's Charity Ball on February 7, 2009. This gala event, a vital fundraiser for both **HopeWorks** and **The**

Grounds, will be held once again at the Hartford Golf Club from 6:00 p.m. until midnight. With its Broadway theme, it makes perfect sense that the emcee of the Ball will be John O'Hurley, former West Hartford resident, star of stage and screen, and winner of the first season of "Dancing With the Stars." A swing band will be providing music for dancing. Imagine the fun as some lucky bidder has the opportunity to win a dance with superstar



John O'Hurley.

A highlight of the evening will be the presence not only of our current Mayor Scott Slifka, but also most of West Hartford's former Mayors.

Our multitalented Mayors will

be presenting a musical aperitif for the enjoyment of all. This evening is also a celebration and appreciation of the Office of the Mayor and all who have served in that capacity.

If you would like more information please call: (860) 561-1175 x 703 or visit www.themayorscharityball.org

Providing hope and help to young people and their families through counseling, education and community outreach.
