

hephzibah heartbeat

NEWS FROM HEPHZIBAH CHILDREN'S ASSOCIATION

Providing safety and care to society's most vulnerable children since 1897

FALL 2013

Dear Friend of Hephzibah,

AS I SIT HERE WITH THE WEATHER CHANGING, I am thinking about another fall years ago when a young man walked into my office. He looked familiar, but I wasn't sure who he was. His voice echoed in my mind, but I couldn't quite place him, and then it hit me; this was Ronnie*! But how could it be? This was a healthy looking young adult named Ron, not the skinny, scared, neglected little boy who was brought to my office years ago! His face was fuller, but I recognized him and his story came rushing back to me.

Ronnie came to Hephzibah when he was 4 years old. The first 4 years of his life were spent on the streets and in and out of homeless shelters. Eventually his mother abandoned him and **he came to live at Hephzibah's Group Home**. He barely spoke, and he had no idea how to use silverware. He was so scared that he hid under the table in my office as I talked to his caseworker.

We know that the early years of a child's life are critical to future development so as you might imagine, Ronnie faced many challenges including emotional, behavioral, and developmental issues.

After spending some number of months at the group home, Ronnie was placed with one of **our amazing foster families**; and with their help and love, he was able to blossom into the healthy young man that now stood before me.

As I think about Ron's foster parents, I am struck by the fact that they were not experts in fostering. They were not doctors, they were not teachers, and they probably weren't perfect; but **they provided the love, structure, and nurturing that this child needed** to come out of a horrible situation and become a productive and successful member of society.

You will find in this newsletter many stories on our foster care and family services programs here at Hephzibah. As you saw in Ronnie's story, the Group Home is only the beginning in a child's journey to heal, it is not the end. We are in desperate need for individuals and families to partner with us in providing safe havens for children in foster care after their time in the Group Homes is over. **Please consider becoming part of our foster care team** and make a lasting impact in a child's life!



Executive Director Mary Anne Brown with some young friends from Hephzibah's awardwinning Day Care program.

* name changed

Mary Anne Brown

Mary Anne Brown
Executive Director



hephzibah happenings!

Harvest Wine and Beer Tasting

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2013

7 PM

Paramount Events

1932 W. Lake Street, Chicago, IL

Hosted by Hephzibah's Oak Park Auxiliary Board and by Jodi Fyfe of Paramount Events

Holiday of Hope Gift Boutique

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2013

6:30 PM to 10 PM

St. Marks Episcopal Church

393 Main Street, Glen Ellyn, IL

Please join Hephzibah's Western Auxiliary Board and start your holiday shopping with beautiful handmade pieces and unique items. Cash bar and raffle.

Hosted by Hephzibah's Western Auxiliary Board

Bring-A-Gift Party

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2013

6 PM

Doc Ryan's Tavern

7432 Madison Street, Forest Park, IL

Join us for a festive evening of fun and good cheer as we gather gifts for the children.

Save the Date for the 2014

Heart of Gold Gala

SATURDAY, MARCH 1, 2014

NEW EXCITING VENUE —

Bridgeport Arts Center

Dinner, Drinks, Dancing and the AUCTION!

holiday of hope

Helping Families in Crisis

YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW that Hephzibah helps abused and neglected kids in our Group Home, but did you know about our **Family Support Program?**

The Family Support Program (FSP) is a part of our Family-Based Services division which **helps local families who are facing difficulty get back on their feet**—before more severe intervention ever becomes necessary.

Most of the participating families have one or more members suffering from a mental health diagnosis, or are undergoing severe financial difficulty. Families such as these are at-risk of breaking up, and in extreme cases, at-risk of intervention from the Department of Children and Family Services. However, providing immediate response and support to families in crisis, in their own home and community, has been proven to alleviate stress and improve the family's living environment.

"A recent case that highlights this program's impact is that of a young mother who, after enrolling in newly offered Hephzibah parenting classes at the recommendation of our social worker, has become more confident in her parenting and is taking more initiative in how she handles difficult circumstances," said Julie Dvorsky, Director of Family-Based Services.

The Family Support Program benefits the whole Oak Park/River Forest community by keeping families stable and intact, and in some cases preventing additional children from entering the local foster care system. All of the families and children served by this program reside in Oak Park and River Forest. Last year 26 families, which include 56 children, were impacted positively by the Family Support Program, and we anticipate the number to be the same or higher in the coming years.

Hephzibah's Family Support Program is made possible by private funding. Current generous supporters include the **REAM Foundation** and the **Oak Park and River Forest Community Foundation**.

How to Become a Foster Parent— or Adopt a Child

Davida Ellen Williams, LCSW, Hephzibah Foster Care Specialist

OUR FOSTER CARE TEAM is in desperate need of foster families for children looking to take the next step from our Group Home, or for children referred to us from DCFS looking for a stable environment after a traumatic home situation.



It takes a special family to open their home and their heart to a child who is grieving the loss of the family that they know, but the unique quality of our foster care program is that we provide many layers of support, resources, and ongoing education about what our children need to recover, to find safety in their world, and to flourish.

The Hephzibah children most often needing foster care placements range in age from pre-school to adolescence. Most of our Hephzibah children are qualified as special needs due to their emotional and behavioral issues resulting from trauma, abuse, and loss. Our goal is to work closely with each child and the families that they are placed in so that we can provide the child every opportunity for healing and growth which is essential to stop the cycle of abuse and neglect!

For most of the children that are entering Foster Care from the Hephzibah Group Homes, Hephzibah is the first safe place that they have ever lived! In order to minimize further trauma from the placement, we have developed specialized transitional group therapy that the children named the "Movin' On Group," to teach them some of the skills that they will need to live in a healthy family home. Fortunately our children are resilient, hopeful and respond so positively to loving, nurturing care! It just takes time...

The first step is to contact our Licensing Family Development Specialist, Crystal Spearman, at 708-649-7178 or cspearman@hephzibahhome.org. The initial call will provide you with answers to questions about our program and will also help to assess whether this is the right fit for you and your family. You will then receive a packet containing information, applications and directions on how to set up a date for a home visit. The next step is to take the 9 session training class prescribed by DCFS which we offer right here at the Hephzibah offices in Oak Park. If you are interested in more information, or are thinking about becoming a foster parent, please call us today!

*If you are a Hephzibah supporter, but becoming a foster parent is not something you are interested in, **PLEASE help us spread the word!** Word of mouth has proven to be the most effective way to recruit new families so if you can invite Hephzibah to speak at a book club, a Church, your workplace, a PTO meeting, etc we would love to give a talk on the joys and rewards of fostering anytime, weekday or weekend! To arrange for a speaker please email DWilliams@hephzibahhome.org, or call Davida at 708 649-7164.*

“The really important kind of freedom”*

Emily Dagistino

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE I WAS RAISED Roman Catholic and the yen for social justice stuck like hot tar to my ribs. Maybe it's because some of my best friends were social workers in child welfare. Maybe it's simply because I was in a comfortable enough spot that I could, and thus wanted to, challenge myself to do something that was only about helping other people—and not at all about helping me.

Yet it has helped me. Prior to becoming a foster parent, I couldn't imagine how children could transform me.

It's not that I was in dire need of transformation. Mine was a comfortable milieu, with a fine job, house, dog and lovely husband. I played the solid hand of cards I'd been dealt at birth to my advantage, scaling the ladder of academic achievement, dipping my toes in the waters of its professional counterpart. I was free to spend most of my time and effort on my family, career, dreams. Why dare open myself to experiences and people beyond my tight, familiar circle?

Maybe it's because I was bored. What I really wanted was for my life to be radically transformed into something more and better than it had been.

Foster care did not disappoint. It connected me with a wider, broader family system than the ones I'd known, while also strengthening my biological families as they evolved and grew with me. It opened me to joy undistilled by self-motivation and derived entirely from sources beyond me. It dropped me squarely in a realm of love in which I had no real business being, and the greatest events I have experienced—events I couldn't control, plan or script—began to unfold.

Kids were at the core of them all. I witnessed the alchemy of their implausible healing, got to love them through it. Freed from my chrysalis, I became a mother, seeing children I'd never otherwise know through the clear eyes of my heart, which refused to lie to me about what needed to be done.

* Title from “This Is Water,” by David Foster Wallace

Emily Dagistino is a writer, blogger, and Hephzibah foster parent. In addition to seven years of professional experience working in health care communications, she has contributed articles, essays, and poems to a number of publications. She is a licensed foster parent in Illinois, where she resides with her husband and son. She writes a blog on life and foster care and other things. You can find it at <http://emilydagistino.com>



Help Hephzibah this Holiday Season...

Attend Hephzibah's 27th Annual

Bring a Gift Party

**Wednesday,
December 11, 2013**

6 pm

Doc Ryan's Tavern

7432 Madison Street, Forest Park

Ages 21 and over

Admission is an unwrapped gift for a child, infant to 18 years.

JOIN US for a festive evening of fun and good cheer as we gather gifts for the children.

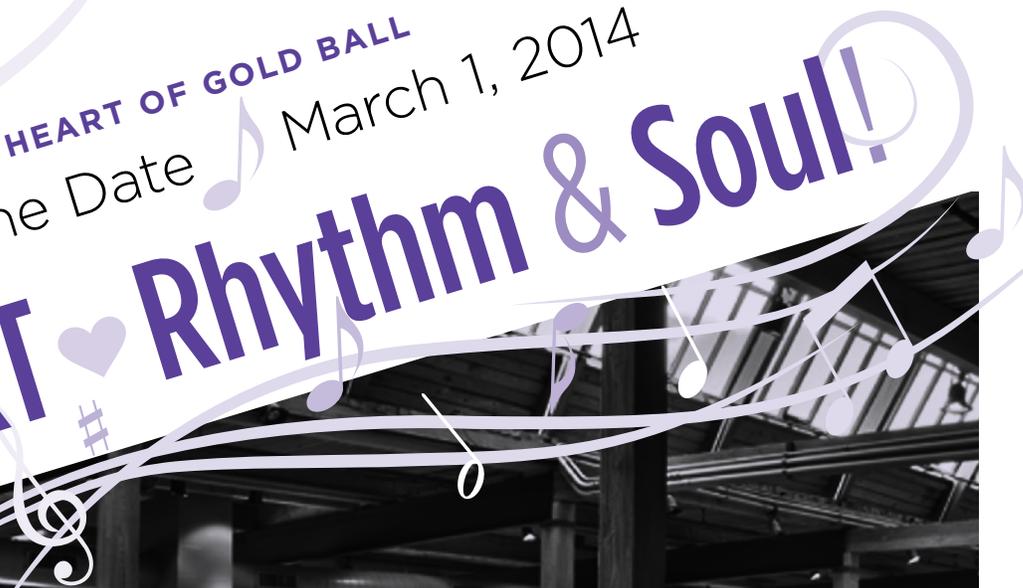
Thank you

to our donors and friends for your generous support throughout the year!



HEART OF GOLD BALL
Save the Date  March 1, 2014

HEART Rhythm & Soul!



HOSTED BY HEPHZIBAH AND THE OAK PARK AUXILIARY BOARD

Join us at the Bridgeport Arts Center for the **2014 Heart of Gold Ball**. The event will be held on **Saturday March 1**, at The **Bridgeport Arts Center** in Chicago. The former Speigel catalog warehouse is a fabulous venue to **celebrate** Hephzibah's Heart of Gold Ball. Its architectural elements include timber construction, exposed brick, soaring ceilings and an **unparalleled view of the Chicago skyline**. This wonderful evening will include **dinner and dancing**, as well as silent and live auctions.

And best of all, when you attend, you'll be supporting Hephzibah's programs for abused and neglected children, and at-risk families.

For information, call Events Coordinator Jen Pullen at **708.649.7140** or visit our website at **www.hephzibahhome.org**.

HEADING TO MIDDLE SCHOOL: Changing Scary to Exciting

HEADING TO MIDDLE SCHOOL can be a stressful time in a child's life. For the first time they will have multiple teachers, they will have a locker, and it will be up to them to get to their classes on time in the 4 minutes that they have for passing period! In addition, middle school kids will age out of Hephzibah's After School Day Care, and may have additional anxiety about coming home to an empty house or how they are going to get their homework done.

Hephzibah's **Transitioning to Middle School Program** is focused towards making the transition smooth and also celebrating the kids' last year in our Day Care program. This year, in the program of about 20 kids, about half of the kids will be going to Brooks, and half to Julian. D97 has all of the kids visit the middle schools with their 5th grade classes, but the consensus was that it felt big and scary when they were there! Talking about the different things they will encounter goes a long way in changing the "scary" to "exciting."

The group of 5th graders that will soon be 6th graders are set up as a special sub-group of the summer Day Care program. They go on some field trips aimed towards older kids, they spend time talking about the middle schools each day, and they have a special restaurant lunch ordered in every Monday which is eaten as a group. This group lunch helps them learn more adult social skills around trying new things and basic group-meal table manners.

The kids would probably say that the field trips were the best part of their summer experience, but some of the most valuable experiences really happened right at the Day Care site! Ms. Cole, Assistant Dean at Julian, came and talked about switching classes, using lockers and she gave advice on how to get to class on time—keep your locker organized! She also discussed some of the different programs, clubs and after school activities that the kids could get involved with.

Melissa and Rob, Youth Interventionists from the Township, talked about what monetary support the Township has available to help during the year for joining extra-curricular clubs and sports, and other Township programs that are available to the kids. They also explained how important it was to practice your lock so you don't have problems when you get to school!

The Hephzibah Staff did something each meeting called "Daily Dilemmas." Daily Dilemmas were an exercise to walk kids through situations they might face, and to talk through some good potential solutions. The focus was on situations that kids could face at school, or at home alone after-school since many of them will be home before parents after aging out of Hephzibah Day Care.

And maybe most importantly, the staff works hard on creating a bond between the kids so that when these children go to the Middle Schools, they see familiar faces and it doesn't seem so intimidating. As Sarah Niederman, LSW, and leader of the Hephzibah Transitions to Middle School Program says, "Even though most of these kids have been in Hephzibah for many years, they are all spread out among the various Elementary schools. By connecting them with a larger group, they will go into middle-school with a strong base of friends; it gives the kids the feeling of having some support and decreases their anxiety about the new school."

The Transition to Middle School program was funded by a generous grant from the **Rotary Club of Oak Park**. This grant covered special supplies, the 6th-grade-only field-trips, lunches, and other items needed for the program. In addition, a grant from **Community Bank** allowed us to purchase two iPads to use for the program. We are so grateful for the support of this important initiative! ♥



Hephzibah Loves to Read!

HEPHZIBAH'S READING PROGRAM, **One Book One Hephzibah**, was featured at the Oak Park Public Library in September. New this year, One Book One Hephzibah is a theme-based reading program that encourages active reading and engagement with literature. For twelve weeks over the summer, the children and their caretakers read books related to weekly themes which included topics such as Community, Laughter and Entertainment, Magic, and Insects. Each week's theme was explored further through field trips, guest speakers, and activities. The exhibit in the children's section of the library had examples of the art and pictures of the activities that the kids did during the program.

One Book One Hephzibah is part of our **Education Enrichment Program**. During the school year the children in the Group Homes receive help with homework and school projects at the After School Academy, and learn key computer skills in our Technology Center. In the summer months they immerse themselves in the arts during One Book One Hephzibah and Colorful Days arts camp.

The Education Enrichment program is a community-led effort! Local educators and volunteers work with staff and caregivers to structure each program, and all programming is coordinated through Hephzibah's District 97 Education Coordinator. ♥

wish list

Hephzibah is looking for some new **Winter Coats**

WE HAVE RECEIVED some lovely new winter coats already, but we are still in need of specific coat sizes for some of the kids in the Hephzibah Group Home.

We are in need of the following sizes:

- ♥ 2 girls size 10, 1 girls size 12, and 2 girls size 14
- ♥ 1 junior size (or women's) size L
- ♥ 4 boys size 6/7, 2 boys size 10, and one boys size 12

If you are shopping and see kids' coats on sale, pick up an extra for a child in need! If you have a barely worn coat in one of these sizes think about donating it! You can drop coats off at the house (946 North Blvd) or at the Hephzibah offices (1144 Lake St) during business hours. If you have any questions or want to arrange a donation after business hours, please contact Deb at dpo@hephzibahhome.org.



Every Friday, Jim Woywood, the director of group homes, **cooks breakfast for the kids at the house.**

Jim is a busy guy running the Hephzibah Group Homes, and with children of his own at home. He makes time to come in early once a week to give the staff a break and to treat the kids to a delicious hot breakfast. Jim mentioned that he really needs a couple of very **LARGE** sturdy frying pans to be able to serve 26 kids in a timely fashion. If anyone has some **LARGE** frying pans in great condition or in the back of the cabinet that you'd like to donate, please drop off at the house at 946 North Blvd. Picture all the pancakes that will be made on them, it's worth the trip over to the house!

Other Wish List items

- ♥ Pajamas — boys and girls, sizes 5-14
- ♥ Gift certificates for bowling, roller skating, movies, Tasty Dog and McDonalds
- ♥ 10 matching fitted twin bed-sheets
- ♥ Snow Pants — size 10 kids to size M adult
- ♥ Small (not expensive) MP3 players
- ♥ Remote control cars, trucks or animals for girls and boys
- ♥ Saucer style sleds
- ♥ Hair products (shampoo, conditioner, detangler, ponytail holders, combs, and little barrettes for braids)



Economy Shop **Needs Volunteers!**

HAVE YOU BEEN WONDERING why you see us asking for volunteers to work at the Economy Shop from time to time?

The Economy Shop is a unique resale shop in Oak Park that is staffed by different charitable organizations in the community. Seven different charities have their own "room" in the economy shop that sells a particular type of item. **Hephzibah is responsible for the Children's Clothing room.**

Each month, the Economy Shop splits their total sale proceeds between the supporting charities, but in order to be eligible to share the proceeds, **each organization must provide volunteers to sort and display the items** that come into their room, and must **staff the room** during sale times.

Our partnership with the Economy Shop provides over \$12,000 a year to support Hephzibah, so it is very important for us to have volunteers to staff the room during the week and the weekends.

If you'd like to **sign up for a shift**, please go to go to our website at www.hephzibahhome.org, and sign up on the volunteer page.

Imagine if a lot of kids gave a little...
TOGETHER we would make a BIG difference.

Would your child like to make a difference?
Share these ideas with them!

- ♥ **Make your birthday more meaningful!** Give one of your gifts to a child at Hephzibah.
- ♥ **Celebrate a special milestone!** (Birthday, Confirmation, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Graduation) by having your friends or family donate funds or items to Hephzibah. We can help you come up with a list of things to donate, email Deb at dpoe@hephzibahhome.org
- ♥ **Make it a point to be a friend** to someone at your school who lives at Hephzibah!
- ♥ **Save your change!** Collect your spare change over the year and bring it in to Hephzibah. Have a contest with your brothers and sisters to see who can collect the most, and then all of you can come to the house and take a tour!
- ♥ **Set up shop!** Sell something: lemonade, cookies, bracelets, your mom's dishes (just kidding, don't sell your mom's dishes!) and donate the money to Hephzibah.
- ♥ **Fulfill a holiday wish!** Save your allowance to buy a gift off the Holiday Wish List for a child at Hephzibah.
- ♥ **Create your own event!** Get together your team, your troop, or your friends and have a dance-a-thon, a jump-a-thon, a relay race, a car wash, a bake sale, or ANYTHING you can think of.

If you have an event or a sale please be sure to **take pictures** and send them to Deb at dpoe@hephzibahhome.org and we will try to put you in one of our newsletters. And all you have to do to set up a time to drop off donations is to call 708.649.7100. We'll make sure someone is at the house to say thanks and to show you around!



news around the Home



Executive Director Mary Anne Brown and Board Member Sherry Carbery celebrate their second-place finish at the Hephzibah Summer Board Challenge.



Hephzibah's 2013 Annual Report is available online at www.hephzibahhome.org



Tom Zimm, Clinical Coordinator for Medical Services at the Group Homes, showing his love for the Cowboys on Team Spirit Day at Hephzibah!

Board of Directors

- Sarah Arnett
- Jackie Barlow
- Terry Brown
- Sherry Carbery
- Francesca DeBiase
- Carol Dunning
- Leslie Jones
- Kenna MacKinnon
- John McLwain
- Beth Pecenka
- Eric Sorensen
- Maureen Stratton
- Byron Taylor
- Cheryl ter Horst
- Mark Trinkka
- Audrey Williams-Lee
- Tom Yates

Fall 2013

Executive Director

Mary Anne Brown

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- Susan Reich
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To make a correction to your mailing address or if you are receiving duplicates of this newsletter, please send an e-mail to bkrause@hephzibahhome.org or call Barbara Krause at 708.649.7140. *Thank you!*

