

The Sunflower News



Spring 2010

Housing+Solutions

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Dear Friends School is out—almost! We consider ourselves to be family in the larger sense of the word—and so rather than focusing solely on the children this summer we have designed a program for everyone—*Family Fun*. Two experienced college students and a computer teacher are organizing a program of creative, educational and fun activities for all the children, adults and families. I hear talk of: pottery, weaving and computer classes, jewelry-making, arts and crafts, gardening, and of course trips to local swimming pools, parks, the library and museums.

This summer parents and children will have the opportunity to enjoy and recognize the benefits of shared fun and learning. We are grateful for a grant from Simple Works to make *Family Fun* real.

Gardens are being readied for a new batch of vegetables and flowers. We have strawberry plants from last

year and there will be sunflowers; but the new wish list includes—beets, lettuce, tomatoes, zucchini, basil, impatiens, cosmos, tulips, and forget-me-nots.

In the summer when the barbecues come out and families are enjoying relaxing together, we see that the idea of *home* has taken root. It won't always be summer, but what the families find here they will take with them all through the year.

We hope you enjoy a good summer season. Thank you for making our work with the women and families meaningful and productive—with a dash of fun and happy memories too.

Rita Zimmer
Executive Director

Enthusiastic gardeners work together to produce an abundance of flowers and vegetables.



Housing+Solutions Launches Mentoring Program

Many of Housing + Solutions' tenants have found employment and are moving successfully towards economic security. A small group, however, are experiencing great difficulty in finding and keeping jobs. There are many reasons; a woman might not have worked in twenty years, or never have had a job, or be hampered by little education. These women need extra help and support. We initiated the Employment Mentoring Program, a component of Women@Work, to take advantage of a built-in resource, represented by tenants who have mastered the world of work and who are able to provide this much-needed help to those struggling to succeed.

The new mentoring program matches women looking for work, or newly employed, with someone who has been successfully working for a year or more. For the woman who is having a hard time finding and keeping a job, the mentoring relationship provides

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The Real Deal:

A Drew House Family Comparison

Annual cost of a mother's incarceration	\$55,000
Annual cost of foster care (\$37,000 per child)	74,000

Total cost for family with two children	\$129,000
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Annual cost for a family with two children at Drew House	\$34,400
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Board of Directors

Rosalia Aquino	Alexis Perrotta
Bonnie Bach	Sylvia Ridlen
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Phyllis Chillingworth	Tracy Rollins Spann
Erika Collins	Evelyn Turner
Andrea Gibbs	Rita Zimmer
Annabel Davis-Goff	

Mentoring Program...con'd

a wonderful support. The mentor, titled *employment specialist*, helps tenants better understand the culture of work, the expectations of employers, supervisors and co-workers, and how to juggle child care, transportation and home commitments. For the employment specialist who even with a good job has trouble making ends meet, a stipend of \$2,500 per year is a significant help.

The Liz Claiborne Foundation recognized the innovative nature of the Women@Work program, and has provided generous support. According to Sheila Renovitch, Director of the Foundation, one-on-one encouragement from women who have "been there" will build the confidence of those striving to achieve employment success.

A good job is the sine qua non for tenants to achieve economic security. Paying close attention to the needs of women has helped Housing+Solutions develop a multi-faceted and successful employment program.

What Housing+Solutions Means to Me

**By Tracey Rollins Spann
Board Chairperson**

About 14 years ago I met a woman who was living on the streets and struggling to remain clean from heroin. She had three children—one for whom her parental rights had been terminated, and two who were living with their grandmother. She had recently spent eighteen months incarcerated on a drug related charge.

When I spoke with "Sara" she was very depressed. She desperately wanted her children in her life, but was unable even to have visits with them because she had no place to live. Sara didn't have much to motivate her—she had no supports and was not allowed to see her children, making her struggle to remain drug-free even more difficult.

Sometime later I was fortunate to see what encouragement and support have meant to Sara. Today she has her children back and is moving forward in a terrific job. She has many plans for the future...

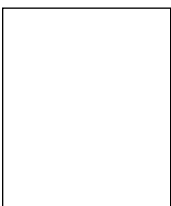
Housing+Solutions provides opportunities for women like Sara to reclaim their lives, address their issues, and remain motivated because they are able to participate in their children's lives and be the parents they have always wanted to be. I am forever grateful to be part of this fine, and essential, work.



Proud mom

Good News

- Housing+Solutions welcomed to the Board of Directors Catherine Brown, President of The Brown Companies, a commercial real estate company, and Andrea Gibbs, Director of Supportive Transitional Housing at Hale House.
- The first family moved out of Drew House after mom completed her court mandates.
- Congratulations to Sharon Price, House Manager at Drew House, who has received an Associates Degree in physical therapy from Kingsborough Community College.
- James, pictured above, just graduated and is going on to middle school.



**Please visit our
website
HousingPlusSolutions.org**

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