Covenant House Michigan

Living the Covenant

CHM Staff Writer
DETROIT, MI

For Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, we featured staff members who hold a special place in the hearts of our youth. This year, Ms. Sanford and Mr. Love were chosen to represent the parental figures of the Cov. Both staff have worked at Covenant House Michigan for two years. The perspective Ms. Sanford brings to her role as a residential advisor is very personal. “I’ve been in their shoes and understand where a lot of them are coming from,” she shared. “I know what it’s like to have difficulties in school, family problems and trouble with friends.” Many of these areas are the cause of struggle in our young people’s lives. Having staff who have walked in their shoes gives the young people someone they can truly relate to.

When Ms. Sanford counsels the youth who come in off the streets, she likes to remind them, “Once you’re down, the only place to look is up,” noting that, “You may not be where you want to be, but you’re right where God has you.” This could sound cliché, but when it comes from someone who has personally experienced tough situations, it carries a lot of weight.

Mr. Love started as a part-time residential advisor and later transitioned into the role of shift leader, where he guides both our transitional housing youth and his fellow staff members.

Bobbie, one of the young women in the Rights of Passage (ROP) program, shared her appreciation of Mr. Love’s “parenting” style. “He’s real and tough, in a common sense way,” she said. “He says, I’m gonna teach you, but not everything cause you need to learn it on your own.” She finds his approach useful for the growing up process, which is the aim of ROP.

Mr. Love’s kind, but no-nonsense, style is a reflection of his 30-year Navy experience where he learned the importance of teamwork and respect for authority. “I learned how to work to accomplish a goal in spite of personal differences,” he shared. His Navy stories come in handy in a program with 30 different individuals living under the same roof.

Affectionately called Pops or Uncle Butter (a family nickname) by some of the residents, Mr. Love constantly reminds them not to give up on their dreams and goals. “It’s going to take work to get you out of this situation and that requires determination,” but he reminds them, “Your situation is temporary, not permanent.”

According to Bobbie, he also brings a spiritual aspect to his work, allowing his own faith to impact the young people. “He reminds us of our covenant, the one we made when we came here,” she recounts, referencing the agreement residents sign upon entry to the program - it links mutual respect of both staff and residents to their role as children of God.

While his job can be tough at times, this year brought a special experience for Mr. Love. On Father’s Day, several former residents contacted him; some reached out to catch up, others simply to say, “Happy Father’s Day.” Each in their own way reminded him of his ongoing role as a father figure in their lives, even after their time as residents at Covenant House Michigan.
Faith Forward

When your church partners with Covenant House Michigan, you’re putting faith into action. Your members can take a practical, hands-on approach to helping our youth, such as hosting lunch and prayer Saturdays, spending the afternoon landscaping or sorting clothes in our clothing closet. Holding fundraisers such as Lenten Soups or a Night in a Box can build transformational relationships with those we serve. You can begin a relationship today that will benefit your church members and change the lives of homeless youth. For more information, call 313.463.2005

It’s not all about prayer and Bible time at Journey Church, sometimes it’s fun and games. Organizers from the church arranged to join our youth for a game night. Guests played board games and verbal guessing games, laughing and bonding over the family-style night of fun.

We really enjoyed our recent trip to the St. Fabian Catholic Church youth group. The teens listened to our young people and asked really good questions about homelessness. Also present were speakers from On The Rise Bakery - Detroit and the Capuchin Soup Kitchen who shared their stories of hardship to success.

The Motor City Youth Federation joined our youth for a fun time of spiritual strengthening during their Prayer and Pizza luncheon.

Weekend worship service with True Word Ministries: What an amazing gift to have the whole church transplanted to our campus last weekend! Thank you for lifting spirits, feeding bodies and enlightening minds.

Bringing a night of blessings to our young ladies, we had a recent visit from the God’s Diamonds program at Word of Faith Church. They pampered our young women, reminding them how special they are in God’s eyes.

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Fun times with the youth group at St. Michael’s Episcopal Church Grosse Pointe Woods before their Night in a Box experience!

St. Anastasia held Vacation Bible School in June. The kids made cards of joy for our young people.

Beautiful notes and toiletry items arrived for our young people from a local Pretty Brown Girl group. Thank you for your dedication to changing the world!

Sending you love from Covenant House Michigan and thanking you for your continuous thoughts and prayers.

DoSomething.org took on a challenge and sent 157,809 handmade birthday cards to young people experiencing homelessness. We received a bunch here at Covenant House Michigan. Birthdays can be depressing when you’re experiencing homelessness so it means a lot to know someone cares and is looking out for you.
Bobbie considers herself an orphan, since she entered foster care at age five. The short period during which she reunited with her biological father, did little to change that description. “Due to circumstances in my home, I ended up running away,” Bobbie shared frankly. In and out of unstable situations, staying with whoever would have her, running away to escape abuse and suspicion at school became a pattern. Eventually, she found her way to Covenant House Michigan.

Bobbie is with us now for the second time. When she first came to us, she left without fixing her life. “I wanted to try and help a friend out,” she admitted. When things didn’t work out, she reluctantly returned to Covenant House Michigan. “I didn’t want to admit I needed help a second time, but I didn’t have any other good options,” Bobbie said. “When I called, Ms. Campbell said to me, ‘Baby, just come home.’” That warm welcoming voice was all Bobbie needed to make up her mind.

During her second time with us, things started falling into place and Bobbie realized she had to put herself first. “I have to be selfish,” she recounted. “When I put other people before myself, I was making progress but not very fast.” She was determined not to get sidetracked.

Learning of Bobbie’s life-long dream to be a nurse, one of our social workers, told her about a program which would pay for Certified Nurse’s Assistant training. Prior to that time, the $500 course fee was an insurmountable obstacle to Bobbie’s dream.

“The course was very fast-paced with everything crammed into a month!” Bobbie said. The classes ran six hours a day, four days a week, with training in medical abbreviations, patient care skills and daily tests. In addition, Bobbie enrolled in an evening math class at Wayne County Community College to sharpen her skills.

Bobbie also has a love for children, so she plans to study both child development and nursing at Wayne State. She hopes to one day work as a nurse and volunteer her time with children in foster care, sharing her personal perspective growing up as an “orphan.” We are so proud of Bobbie!

Red Nose Day

Laugh, Give. Save a Kid: Covenant House residents and students show their support.

Red Nose Day is on a mission to lift kids out of poverty and has raised over $1 billion globally in the last 25 years. This year, Covenant House was honored to be one of the 11 Charity Partners. Red Nose Day is the day when people across the U.S. get together and do something funny for money at home, school and work. There’s a fantastic night of TV, with comedy and entertainment to inspire the nation to give generously.

Volunteering with Style

Ava Gardner, a Metro Detroit area salon owner, takes time away from her busy schedule to share her knowledge with the youth of Covenant House Michigan. Her personal knowledge of hairstyling, men’s styling needs and personal grooming has brought a wealth of new insights into the fashion lives of the attendees. In addition, she spends one afternoon a week helping CHM Social Worker, Ms. Gray, with administrative support.

“Ava has made a tremendous difference! We have over 14 boxes and she’s already gone through 400 files, weeding out all the inactive ones. She’ll come in and just quietly start working in the corner of the office, getting rid of old records, archiving and filing each document. It’s been fantastic having her here!” exclaimed Ms. Gray.

Ava is planning a nail-care presentation, giving the youth an opportunity to give each other manicures.

Voices of Youth Count

We were happy to host the Voices of Youth Count led by Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Voices of Youth Count is an innovative, original research effort designed to link evidence and action by capturing the experiences of runaway and homeless youth, more clearly defining the scope of the issue, and driving compelling knowledge into the hands of the broad national community dedicated to ending youth homelessness.

 Agencies that participated included Alternatives for Girls, Applied Survey Research, Assured Family Services, Wayne State University, the City of Detroit, Essentials for Life, Motor City Switch, Ruth Ellis and Southwest Counseling Solutions. Participants attended trainings and then went out into the community with surveys to obtain data on homeless youth.

Orphan to CNA

Celebrating our young people
Investigation Continues for Do Good Businesses

Deloitte Magic

While the Deloitte employees all told the same story, insisting they got their hands dirty during the Impact Day event, witnesses are doubtful. The amount of work which was accomplished that day, leaves witnesses suspecting the use of magic fairy dust. Noting the consumption of copious amounts of coffee, a basketball tournament during the lunch break and genuine smiles on every face, we’re not sure who did all that work? No one knows for sure how it was accomplished, but the evidence is clear: the campus landscaping and the paint job on the exterior of the property building underwent an amazing transformation!

They’ve Got Their Eye on Us

Contemporary and vintage eyewear retailer OPTIK Birmingham, in partnership with Oakland Ophthalmic Surgery, opened its first-ever Detroit pop-up shop in Cass Corridor. For the month of April, the pop up shop donated $1,000 of their “city sales” to support Covenant House Michigan.

Get a Job and a Better Life

Setting its sights on Detroit, a city desperately in need of economic capital, Walmart invested $25,000 in helping homeless youth obtain employment. Through the Walmart Foundation’s State Giving Program, the Employment Center at Covenant House Michigan received new tables and chairs for their computer center, software for aid in vocational assessment testing, support for the program’s annual job fair, and transportation funding for job interviews. Computers for the program were donated by Dow Corning through the assistance of long-time supporter Darin Franklin.

Trinity Turns the Tables on CHM

In an unexpected turn of events, employees at Trinity Health turned a question and answer session with CHM resident speakers into a mentoring session. One of the youth expressed his doubts about starting college right away given his uncertainty about what he wanted to study. The attendees jumped in and began a group discussion about careers, choice of major and the importance of education based on their individual experiences. The range of ages and career histories/major choices provided a great perspective to the youth who was pondering his options.

Collecting Interest

Zurich Insurance, a global leader in managing risk, today announced it is awarding a total of $744,250 to 126 nonprofit organizations throughout the U.S., and Covenant House Michigan was one of them. Members of the Zurich team have slept out on CHM’s campus for the past couple of years helping to raise funds and awareness of youth homelessness.

Quick to Organize

No one wants to start spring cleaning but the after-effects are always worth the effort. This year, staff at Covenant House Michigan were relieved to hand off their spring duties to volunteers from Quicken Loans. The Quicken guests made short work of the winter build-up in the clothing closet and put everything in order.
Union Organizers Protest Homelessness

Local organizers from the UAW Ford – Flat Rock Assembly Plant’s Diversity and Inclusion team, collected around $5,000 in protest of youth homelessness. Not only did these professional organizers take up a collection for the cause, they also gave up a Saturday afternoon to go bowling with our youth. The money will be used to provide homeless youth with new opportunities. DeAndre, one of the youth present, was quite the bowler and said the afternoon out was a lot of fun.

“Everybody there was friendly and cool. When I walked out I felt like they were my friends (the UAW group), like I knew them for a long time.” A few weeks later, he was shocked when he saw them (on campus), “I didn’t think they would come here. It made me feel like there are people out there who still care.” DeAndre came over and gave high-fives, exchanged hugs with his new friends and insisted on jumping in a pic with the “biggest check I ever saw!”

Driven to Make a Difference

The Lograsso’s are longtime supporter of Covenant House Michigan so when their Ford Explorer and Honda Odyssey took a dump, they donated it to Charity Motors and asked that the proceeds be given to Covenant House Michigan. We recently received the check for $1,850! If you plan on donating your car, check out Charity Motors and designate Covenant House Michigan as the recipient.

Volunteer Refuses to Leave Campus

Marquise Williams joined the Covenant House Michigan family by giving a year of service through Christ the King Service Corps. He quickly learned the ropes and began working with the Outreach Team, in the residential programs and assisted with aftercare for residents that transitioned into their own apartments. His eight-hour schedule turned into twelve or more, not because we are so demanding, but because he looked for more opportunities to help. Staff would urge him to go home and rest, take a break and have some fun, but Marquise wasn’t open to the advice. Now that his year of service is coming to an end and it’s apparent that we can’t get rid of him, we decided to offer him a full-time paid position.

We’re proud to announce that Marquise will be a new member of the Outreach Team staff. We’re honored to have such a dedicated member join our team.

Stephanie Taylor, Outreach Manager and Marquise’s new boss, is enthusiastic about her new hire. “Marquise is such a team player, dynamic, patient, and on fire - empowering the youth and believing they can be empowered. He goes the extra mile to let them know he cares and helps them to think a different way. He allows them to have a voice, teaching them how to get their point across in an acceptable way. Marquise wants to prepare them to be leaders. He tries to break the cycle and instill a different perspective.”

Cruisin for a Cause

Fellow Detroiter Danny Koker who hosts the show “Counting Cars” on the history channel is determined to find, restore, customize and sell classic cars. He partnered with Ally Financial to customize a Detroit themed Dodge Challenger.

The car will be up for auction and on display at the Dream Cruise on Woodward outside of Duggan’s Irish Pub on August 20. Proceeds from the auction will benefit Covenant House Michigan. Be sure to check it out!

Pay it Forward

Our friend Scott LaRiche from the Detroit Auto Dealers Association dropped off new shoes and socks as part of Pay it Forward Day.

LEARN MORE TODAY, Visit www.covenanthousemi.org
And this is...Covenant Idol

Students and residents from Covenant House Michigan practiced daily in anticipation of this year’s Covenant Idol. When the day of the big show arrived, each of the young people encouraged each other from the side room of Detroit’s Hard Rock Café as show time approached. After an energetic opening act from the Detroit Tap Repertoire, a comedic appearance by a resident and a showcase of particular talent by the dancing duo Daniel and Charles, the show was underway.

All of the competitors put forth their best foot and showed the results of their endless hours of practice. Ranging from rap, to praise dance, to singing, the performers engaged the audience and wowed everyone with their enthusiasm, determination and stage presence.

In the end, the three competitors who came away with top points: Kenito, who snagged third place after performing an original song; Samira, who came in second place, after singing her heart out and winning over the audience with her powerful vocals; and Tavon, taking first place after rapping an original piece. Tavon’s personal lyrics, movement and overall performance drew listeners in and stole hearts. Congratulations to all of our young performers who did an incredible job throughout their time in Covenant Idol.

The courage to get up on stage, persevere through the practices and the first round of the competition, not to mention supporting each other with such heartfelt solidarity, was a beautiful thing to behold!

A big thank you to DJ 2Hype; our judges, Drew Schultz of Dime (Detroit Institute of Music Education), Lazar Favors, founder of Yo Fav! Entertainment, Detroit Saxappeal from Collective Peace, and Dee Lane, Producer and Engineer at the Star Factory; and Shannon, of Channel 95.5’s Mojo in the Morning for hosting the show.

Detroit Arts Immersion

Art, Dance, Music and Drama

So much positive energy at the Cov this spring! In addition to guests judging our Covenant Idol campus show, our friends from Detroit Arts Immersion led workshops on dance, music, poetry, art and more! A big thank you to New Leaders Arts Council of Michigan - NLACM for funding this project! Our young people look forward to your return.

Underground with the Cov

The 2nd Annual Underground with the Cov was a fun night for young professionals to mingle, taste interesting bites with wine pairings, listen to music and, for those who were lucky, win some really cool prizes. Over 100 people bought tickets to the event. Guests were sent out a riddle 48-hours prior to the date with clues hinting to the location, Will Leather Goods. Chef Matt Tulpa from Salt & Saffron prepared four courses including calamari meatballs and miso and soy short ribs. Fieldstone Winery provided wine to pair with each course and brought apple wine and cider for dessert pairings. Mudgies donated a Spanish gazpacho soup and summer salad. Guests raved about Detroit Pop Shop’s strawberry lemonade popsicles and Vicecream’s smoked vanilla/whiskey caramel graham ice cream. Metro Detroit’s hard groovin’ jazz funk organ trio GFK Trio played music with special guest ISLÀ joining on vocals. We had so much fun, we didn’t want the night to end. Thanks to all who participated by donating and volunteering their time. Next up: Fowling with the Cov, October 20 at the Fowling Warehouse in Hamtramck. Look for more info on our website. If you’re a young professional looking to make a difference for homeless youth, contact Michelle Kuhar at 313.463.2343 to get started.
Yoga, Bowling, Kayaking and Basketball, oh my!

Our residents were given the opportunity to go kayaking for the day, something most have never done. Thanks Youth Connection for sponsoring the fun!

Finding calm in the midst of hardship, our young people attend Yoga classes led by A Life Aware Yoga & Wellness. A special thanks to Yoga By Design Foundation who sponsors the sessions.

In the annual Deloitte vs. Everybody Basketball game, local Deloitte players took to the court against youth in the Caritas and ROP programs. The Cov residents threw themselves into the game, making the most of their home court advantage, while onlookers from the 2016 Deloitte Impact Day enjoyed the lunchtime amusement.

Thank you Flat Rock Assembly Plant UAW Ford - Diversity and Inclusion Committee for your generous support of our youth. Our young people keep talking about the great time they had at your bowling fundraiser!

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Spartan’s Will, Warrior Pride

Giving a shout-out to our friends from Michigan State University who spent their Spartan Will Power - Global Day of Service with us!

Thanks to the Wayne State University Athletics Department and their annual Basic Needs Drive, our Outreach Team received a boat-load of new toiletries! Go Warriors!

CHA Graduates 87 Students this June

Graduates from Covenant House Academy - Grand Rapids.

Students from WSU Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at Wayne State University learned more about homelessness and made toiletry kits for our young people.
If you want to help CHM provide for homeless, runaway and at-risk youth and young adults, please make checks payable to Covenant House Michigan and insert into the enclosed envelope.

Mail to: CHM, 2959 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Detroit, MI 48208.
Or donate online at www.covenanthousemi.org

Mission Statement

We who recognize God’s providence and fidelity to His people are dedicated to living out His covenant among ourselves and those children we serve, with absolute respect and unconditional love. That commitment calls us to serve suffering children of the street, and to protect and safeguard all children. Just as Christ, in His humanity, is the visible sign of God’s presence among His people, so our efforts together in the covenant community are a visible sign that effects the presence of God, working through the Holy Spirit among ourselves and our kids.