

# Providence House Heartline

703 Lexington Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11221  
www.providencehouse.org

Christmas 2010

## Women Speak about Providence House

Through unexpected life circumstances Ms. C. and her three year old daughter J. found themselves homeless.

When they arrived at Providence House in September, Ms. C. was determined to build a better future for her daughter as well as for herself.



J. and her mom Ms. C.

Ms. C. has made great strides to taking control of her life. In her own words:

*“Since I’ve been here at Providence House I have been made to feel comfortable. The staff are friendly and my case manager has helped me a lot.”*

Ms. C. meets regularly with the Providence House on-site case manager to work on her progress towards becoming independent.

In the short two and half months since their arrival at Providence House Ms. C. has enrolled her daughter at the on-site Providence House Child Care Center; begun her search for independent housing; is receiving counseling on employment opportunities; and has been advised by the Providence House staff Nurse on her health concerns and referred for appropriate medical care.

Ms. C. very poignantly expressed her gratitude for Providence House when she stated:

*“I thank God.*

The following is a testament by Ms. A., a former resident of Providence House:

*“After serving almost twenty years in prison, I was devastated when I realized I would not be able to parole home to my mother. I knew that I needed to be in a safe environment that was structured but not controlled. I was also terrified of going into the shelter system. I had heard of Providence House and the services they offered and I decided to write them and explain my situation. Not long afterward I received a letter and an application. I filled out the application and I was given a phone interview about two weeks later. During that phone interview I knew that Providence House is where I needed to be because I was treated as an adult woman and for the first time in years someone was asking me what I wanted to do and where I wanted my life to go.”*



Ms. A

Since “graduating” the Providence House Re-Entry Program for women on parole, Ms. A. has successfully re-integrated into the community with her own place to live and successful employment as a counselor at a major non-profit.

Needless to say that just as Ms. A. is grateful for the help she received at Providence House, we at Providence House are equally proud at how diligently she worked towards taking control of her difficult life circumstance and cementing a brighter future for herself.

**CORE COMMUNITY**  
*Reflections on Providence House*

Providence House is a community where women receive support from each other and from the dedicated Sisters and lay core community members. The Core Community are Sisters and lay volunteers who live in our residences and share in the day-to-day life with our women. By their presence, the Core Community imparts the best education possible — teaching by example. Each residence provides support and encouragement to the women and children through community living, spirituality, hospitality, compassion and advocacy.

The following are reflections by current Core Community members Sister Mary Doyle, CSJ and Audrey Belanger. Sister Mary has been a Core Community member for 25 years and Audrey joined in September 2010.

**Audrey Belanger's Reflection:**

“Sunday one of the residents had to go to PATH where they told her that her application had been denied for shelter. For two days she had to stay with her daughters in temporary housing, not knowing where they would end up. The staff and Sisters were working hard to advocate for her, but no one knew if it would be enough. I hated to think her little girls might not have a place to wear the Halloween costumes she had picked out for them weeks ago. Tonight they came home to providence House. I realize that this is going to be their home for a short period of time, but it was good to have them back home for the holiday. It felt a bit like a Halloween miracle when I recognized the voices downstairs.”



**Children at Halloween Party at Providence House**



**Mother and daughter**

**Sister Mary Doyle's Reflection:**

“Sisters of Saint Joseph profess that the gift of unity, hospitality and reconciliation is what we try to offer our world. Living in the Core Community at Providence House is an opportunity to deepen an understanding of the meaning of these words. Sharing table conversation, reading stories to the children after supper, witnessing the women carrying their burdens, being forgiven after a misunderstanding are all ways I have come to realize the gifts I have been given while living in the core community. Holidays are special opportunities to create joy and hope. One significant time for me is when we decided to help the women come to grips with the memories and the emotions around a holiday like Christmas. All of us sat in a circle one evening after the children were in bed and reflected on the answer to the question ‘What was your best Christmas?’ After some minutes of silence, we described that memory and why it still, many years later, stands out so much. This proved to be a powerful instance of bonding and compassion among all of us. As each one told her story, a fuller sense of what makes Christmas meaningful emerged that night. It was a powerful way to begin the Christmas season that year.”

