

Providence Center

A ministry of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus

Celebrating New Experiences

A quote from Cornelia Connelly speaks to the spirit and strength of Providence Center's students. "We never know what we can do until we try. Perseverance gains the crown." This issue of our newsletter focuses on how our students are embracing new experiences and opening new possibilities in their lives. These are stories of perseverance, overcoming linguistic isolation and material poverty to organize study groups and embrace a life of faith. They are stories of people learning what they are capable of,

whether it's attending their first play or opening a college acceptance letter.

Nothing can be more inspiring than the look in the eye of a person who has accomplished something they didn't believe possible, or who has experienced something new and wondrous. Every day for over 19 years, Providence Center has been blessed to witness the human spirit set free. You have been a



critical part of this ministry, providing the donations, volunteer hours, and prayers that sustain us. Our staff, our students, you—we lift each other to gain the crown!

Facing the Future



Alexa Velez, 18, looks forward to graduation.

In the midst of the Homework Club chaos are three serene faces, their calm dispositions reflecting a maturity far beyond their years. These are our Teen Mentors, and by now, they are old pros at managing our after school program. But now they are on the verge of experiencing something entirely new – adulthood. Alexa Velez, 18, talks of the pressure of Mercy Vocational School as she prepares to graduate in June.

She has set her sights on a career in cosmetology, though she is seriously considering training in the medical profession as an ultrasound technician. What has working with 25 rambunctious children taught her? "Patience!" she says with a laugh.

Speaking of patience... Glexdy Rodriguez, 17, is (cont'd on page 2)

Spring 2013

Our Mission

Providence Center engages children, youth and adults in educational opportunities within the Fairhill/West Kensington community of North Philadelphia.

The Center values respect for the dignity of each person and creates a safe, hospitable place for learning.

Our Programs

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- Homework Club
- Picture/Change
- Summer Camp
- Teen Leaders

ADULT EDUCATION

- English Language Classes
- Individual ESL Tutoring

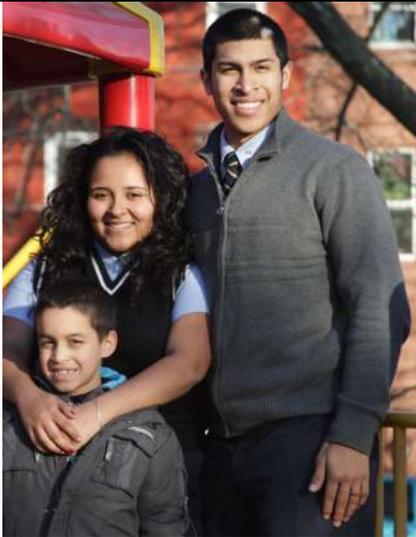
FAITH AND FAMILY

- Prayer Group
- Women's Retreats

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Facing the Future (Cont.)



Paola Lopez, 18, wishes to carry on the mission of Providence Center through her own community work.

currently awaiting responses from the several colleges to which she has applied, including Westchester College and Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). Right now she faces a

multitude of tough decisions – to attend school near home or farther away? To study American Sign Language or pursue a career in Sports Medicine? But working at Providence Center has prepared her to make these decisions. When asked how assisting in Homework Club has helped her, she becomes thoughtful. By acting as a role model for the younger children, she responds, “I learned to control myself.”

Then there is Paola Lopez, 18. When asked about her future plans, she does not hesitate. “Business,” she says, “I’ve already taken some college courses in finance and economics.” But even better, Paola wishes to use her skills to create and manage her own non-profit. Someday, she wants to collaborate with Providence Center

in work for the community. She has been accepted to Montgomery Col-



Glexdy Rodriguez, 17, has grown into a role model for younger children at Providence Center.

lege and IUP, but is reluctant to attend college so far away from Providence Center. When asked why, she smiles broadly. “It’s my second home.” ♦

Spiritual Renewal

Waves lap against the Jersey shoreline as a cool breeze drifts across the beach. This would be a relaxing environment for anyone, but for the women in Providence Center’s prayer group, it is especially important. Every Spring and Fall, about nine community members escape the everyday pressures of work and motherhood, retreat to Stone Harbor, and slip into a deeper communion with God. That weekend, Sister Peggy Doherty and Sister Tese Currie lead the women through a structured prayer retreat in their native language of Spanish. The day begins with a group breakfast and continues with several reading, writing and conversational exercises for reflection and spiritual

growth. One of the highlights of this retreat is a discussion of the life and works of the Society’s founder, Cornelia Connelly. Speaking to these women about their experience yields further insight into how this affects them. “What I like is the time spent with my Lord,” says one. “I love to see how God moves each and every one of us in a special way.” This time away from the struggles of daily life results in the strengthening of social bonds and a feeling of growing closer to God. These women of faith return with renewed energy, a greater sense of community, and perhaps, a new perspective. ♦

St. Edward’s Old Neighborhood Reunion. October 20, 2013, Connstattler from 1:00 to 5:00 Contact Rusty Olimpo for details. 215-380-8359



Sister Peggy and two prayer group members enjoy the beach at Stone Harbor.

A Cinderella Story



If you ask them about the best part of the production, they'll tell you about the Fairy Godmother. She dressed in long, flowing white robes and took on the graceful persona of a dove. It was a new interpretation of *Cinderella*, and on January 31st, children at Providence Center experienced this unique vision for the first time through the medium of theater. This wonderful

opportunity was provided to the Homework Club students free of charge, offering a new experience to children who would not ordinarily be able to visit the theater. It is part of Providence Center's mission to provide a fun cultural experience to each child at least once a month.

That Thursday night, twenty-three of our students and hundreds of other children packed the crowded Arden Theater. The actors connected with the children through colorful costumes and well-timed humor, and took time after the play to answer any questions the children had about acting. (One child asked with trepidation, "Did you really kiss?")

One of our 2nd graders, Adriana, was even invited on stage during the production to try on the glass slipper. When asked

about her first experience at the theater, she replies, "I thought a play was like a movie theater before watching *Cinderella*." One of our 3rd grade boys put it this way: "A play is like a movie but not in a movie screen." While many agreed that the Fairy Godmother was the highlight of the show, they also enjoyed the beautiful dresses, the funny characters, and the lovingly crafted set. After the question and answer session, Arden personnel handed out a free book to each child. Would the children want to see a play again? The answer is unanimous. Elizabeth, one of our rambunctious 1st graders, expresses it best: "I never [saw] a play before, but now I love plays more than regular movies." ♦



The Next Level

"What time does English class end?" That's a difficult question to answer for Isabel, Marcela, Sofia and Victoria (names changed), four women in the advanced English group. Since beginning their studies at Providence Center, they have taken it upon them-



Sister Peggy Doherty's ESL students learn every chance they get.

selves to learn as much as possible outside of scheduled class time. After lunch, they are off to Sofia's house to practice English. The next stop is the local Cousin's supermarket, where they take turns asking questions in English: "How much is a half-pound of cheese?" "Do you have Goya beans?" "What time does the store close?"

Does this mean class ends in the afternoon? Not necessarily. Sometimes, these women meet in the evening to do their homework, practice verb tenses and put vocabulary words on index cards. They even meet on weekends to have an English-only conversation over a delicious meal.

What drives these women to work so hard? As recent immigrants to the United States, they wish to improve their ability to get a job, help their families, and interact with teachers and parents at their children's schools. But most importantly, these ladies have forged a special bond. By sharing in the learning process, they overcome social isolation to develop a deeper sense of belonging and a powerful sense of community. ♦

WAYS YOU CAN HELP

“Generosity, generosity, generosity must be the beginning and ending of our life.” -Cornelia Connelly

Financial Donation*

- * Become a monthly donor
- * Ask your employer to match your gift
- * Consider a bequest to Providence Center

Volunteer

- * Tutor adults learning English
- * Plan activities for kids
- * Help in the office
- * Volunteer your trade or skill

Sponsor our Summer Camp!

It costs Providence Center \$500 per child to run our month-long summer camp. We are committed to serving needy families, so parents only pay \$30. We need your help to make up the difference! Please consider a donation that will allow us to provide kids healthy meals, recreation, field trips, and fun activities that reinforce literacy and math skills. Thank you!

**Gifts to Providence Center are tax-deductible*

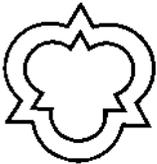
For information, contact David Chiles at dchiles@providencecentershcj.org.

Help us Spread the Word!

Invite us to speak at your parish or community group! If you would like to arrange a presentation, contact Christy Mocerri: cmocerri@providencecentershcj.org



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