

HIGHLIGHTS

Hesed House: Ade's Launchpad into Housing & Career Success

Because of hard work (and your help) mother of formerly homeless family is now a nurse.

Bad luck and an even worse business partner landed Ade (pronounced Ah-day) and her three kids at Hesed House's front door on a Wednesday in 2012. By Sunday, the family of four were residents in our Transitional Living Community. Ade, a Nigerian immigrant, came to the U.S. in 1996 and became a U.S. citizen in 2011. She shared, "In Africa, we call America "God's Home Country". To be a citizen here, you are blessed. You work more, you get more."

"I felt so much freedom when we moved in. I felt so empowered."

And work she did! As soon as the family settled into TLC, Ade utilized onsite job training and career services that led her heart down a path to a nursing career. While she was a resident in TLC, she completed her CNA (and even traveled from Aurora to Chicago Heights to make it happen). Her work ethic served as an excellent model for her kids who, because of you, were afforded the opportunity to play football and run track (her daughter



"I still know Hesed House is always my home!" says Ade, in uniform during a recent visit back to Hesed House.



Ade's son supporting his mom at her pinning ceremony!

was 4th in State in hurdles that year!). Thanks to you, within two years Ade's family moved into their own home. Always grateful, Ade explained, "When I became homeless, I lost my dignity, I felt powerless. Hesed House provided me with constant and ongoing dignity and made me feel like a human being again, allowing me to reach the goals I set."

Ade recalls her first day in her new home, "I felt so much freedom when we moved in. I felt so empowered." "We were given a Home Starter Kit and I remember marveling at the fact that it came with everything we needed, even salt! Who thinks of salt?! I mean, it was so wonderful!"

Since obtaining housing in 2014, Ade has completed her RN program at Waubensee Community College, obtained employment, and two of her children have received collegiate athletic scholarships in the sports they started (football and track) while living at Hesed House.

Dear People of Hesusd,

Sometimes I struggle to love God.

No, wait, that didn't come out right. That's not what I mean. Not exactly...

You see, my faith tradition tells me that human beings are created in the *image of God*. Each person bears the imprint of the Creator. We are vessels designed to carry the divine. *I know this to be true in ways I cannot put into words.*

Here's the problem: that image of God resides in a human being, and sometimes that human is having a bad day. Sometimes that vessel for the divine is tired or hungry or overwhelmed (or intoxicated). Sometimes that person who bears the imprint of the Creator also bears the imprint of past trauma (or a different political ideology).

It is hard to love the image of God when it is being ornery or loud or disagreeable.

But faith has never been a call to timid conformity. It lifts us out of the confines of our own comfortable cynicism and petty prejudices. Faith asks you to see divinity in yourself, the alcoholic on the corner, the former President, the current President, everyone.

Such a bold and audacious faith specifically makes two demands of us:

- We must love the vulnerable and marginalized, even when they are unlovable. I have been called some really unpleasant things by some really intoxicated individuals. God's solution is simple: "Love them anyways." Society wants you to separate the poor into "deserving" and "undeserving" categories, but our most pressing social issues will only be solved with a radical love that sees the inherent worth of every person.
- We must love our political enemies. People who vote differently than you are endowed with the image of God. Even when they are irrational. Even when they are mean-spirited. Even—I struggle with this one—when they are hostile to the vulnerable and marginalized. Such a love does not require you to submit: It is possible to disagree in love. It is possible to ask for accountability in love.

We live in a world that can be overwhelming. The solution—the only solution—is a love that is overwhelming, all-consuming and universal; a love that recognizes the inherent value of everyone we encounter. Such a love can remake the world in its image.

But it begins with you and me loving the person right in front of us.

Peace,

Ryan J. Dowd, Atty., MPA
Volunteer, Donor & Executive Director

"Such a love can remake the world in its image."



30-Year Volunteer Serves Faithfully 5 Days a Week

Ms. Frances is a master of southern cooking (and creative leftovers!).

Frances Jones, much better known on River Street as "Ms. Frances", has spent the better part of the last three decades filling roles at Hesusd House. In her current role, she serves as an integral part of the kitchen crew as a volunteer during PADS AM Monday through Friday, year-round. Serving up a nutritious meal for 100 or more guests each day, she explains, "Whatever leftovers there might be from dinner the night before, even if it isn't enough for 100 people, we are so creative and collaborative in making every bit of food count, we make it work!"



Ms. Frances with her favorite Hesusd kitchen utensil!

She shared a story of a guest who was sick at one point and ended up being hospitalized. She visited him and it meant so much to him that when he got out, he saved long enough to get a gift card to a restaurant to give her so that HE could finally treat HER to a meal. "I will never, ever forget that," she recounted.

Although Ms. Frances will tell you any day she comes to Hesusd House is

her best day there, the guests will tell you her best day is her annual Soul Fest celebration where she shares her home cooked southern specialties with the guests as a special treat! The guests that access daytime programming appreciate the effort Ms. Frances puts into making sure that the lunches she puts out are going to provide comfort to those who eat it. "We definitely miss her

when she takes a vacation, because of her food but also because of how she cares for us as people too. I can tell, we matter to her," a guest said. Ms. Frances explains, "Everyone here just wants someone to give them time, to listen to their story. I love to listen."

"Everyone here just wants someone to give them time, to listen to their story. I love to listen."

Homeless Woman Achieves Sobriety, Thanks to You

Shanika completed substance abuse programming at Hesusd House and now mentors others.

Shanika struggled with addiction since she was 17, but because of programming provided thanks to you, she is sober, on a path to permanent housing for her family and already giving back to her community. Shanika flawlessly completed substance abuse programming with Breaking Free in Hesusd House's Comprehensive Resource Center this year.

Shanika did so well with her program that she is already back and helping

others toward their sobriety as a mentor in the program. "I want others to know, if I can do it, they can do it too. Even if I only help one other person, it will be worth it."

Shanika credits the programming you helped provide her with for totally changing her life. I can finally breathe again and work toward my other goals including housing."



Shanika in her favorite sweatshirt, she thanks you for providing her with HOPE!

Counting Miracles: Successes from January 2017 – December 2017



Isaiah Celebrates his 5th Birthday at Hesed House!

Isaiah barely contains his excitement on his special day.



“Your child receiving a gift, cake and balloons on their 5th Birthday when you are homeless and at a shelter is such a blessing,” explains Isaiah’s mom. The family, including 2 brothers and their grandmother (as well as the other 180+ guests in the PADS Overnight Emergency Shelter!) got to sing “Happy Birthday”, share cake and celebrate Isaiah on his special day this year (the same as we provide every other child living with us!).

Upcoming Special Events

10th Annual Champions of Hope Breakfast

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

Pipers Banquets
7-8:30 am

Join us for breakfast, networking, live entertainment, and raffle prizes!



7th Annual Derby Party

Saturday, May 5, 2018

Embassy Suites by Hilton
Chicago Naperville
3 pm

Join us for an afternoon of southern hospitality and Derby excitement!



For reservations or sponsorship, please visit www.hesedhouse.org and follow the link under special events. For more information, please contact Michelle Kallevik at 630-914-6428 or donate@hesedhouse.org



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THANK YOU! We are so thankful for the love and generosity of our donors, staff and volunteers. If you would like to learn more about how you can get involved, please contact Director of Development Michelle Kallevik, CFRE at 630-914-6428 or donate@hesedhouse.org.

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