



# PEACE HOUSE COMMUNITY

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## Mission:

The goal of Peace House Community is to offer a non-violent, welcoming and inclusive community for poor and marginalized women and men who are seeking companionship, safety from the streets and personal affirmation. PHC provides a platform for expressing beliefs, hurts, desperation, hopes and fears too long hidden in so many bruised and broken hearts. Community members are affirmed through mutual sharing, respectful listening and appreciation of each person's value and worth.



# Summer 2020 Newsletter

## 35 years ago Sister Rose Tillemans opened Peace House on Franklin Avenue.

Her dream was to open a place where people from the streets could find refuge from the storms of poverty, alcoholism and mental illness that swirled around them. They could come in to talk, have a cup of coffee and break bread. In 1985 she found a place to house her dream at 510 East Franklin Avenue. At first Sister Rose was about the only one who saw her dream. The neighbors and merchants were concerned about another shelter in the neighborhood. But gradually, one by one, people saw the peace signs in the window and dropped in to see what it was all about. Soon they had a community and a place where they were welcomed, affirmed, listened to and valued – a place where their humanity was recognized. Originally skeptical of the Peace House concept, Brian Coyle, former Minneapolis City Council member (now deceased) said in 1991, “It’s a sanctuary in the middle of the chaos of the inner city. It is people finding their voice in very earthy and human terms.”

And now, 35 years later, in a brighter and airier building, the mission and guiding principles of the Peace House Community have remained the same – to be a place where people are honored as human beings and not judged. A place of safety and respite from the streets.

### A place to belong.



The community members' thoughts about their relationship with the Peace House have echoed similarly through the years:

- \* “Peace House is my only family.”
- \* “If there wasn’t Peace House, I wouldn’t have the respect or caring that I get at Peace House.”
- \* “This is where I am able to joke with folks as if they were my siblings.”
- \* “If there wasn’t Peace House, I would be back at places that had armed security guards and no one would know my name.”



# Join us in Celebrating!

Mark your calendars! On October 17th, we will celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Peace House Community by hosting a fundraiser! Board members and volunteers have pledged \$20,000 and we hope to match this amount at the fundraiser. Donors will be asked to purchase at least one \$35 raffle ticket. The grand prize will be a \$500 gift card with other exciting raffle prizes available. More details to follow via personal invitation.

We would like to share this heartfelt letter that one of our volunteer interns wrote at the end of his experience at the Peace House Community. It beautifully sums up the sentiments that many of our dedicated volunteers feel. (Reprinted with permission)

*Dear Peace House Community,*

*What a wonderful experience this year at Peace House has been. From the very first day Thomas and I visited, I felt an incredible sense of welcoming into this community, and as the year progressed, I started to consider Peace House my second family, my second home. I was able to have full-length conversations with people I never would have had the chance to connect with outside of the Peace House setting. I learned the people's stories. They shared their grievances as well as what makes them happy. I heard stories that brought me close to tears as well as some that had me bent over laughing. Some Thursdays would be spent in deep theological discussion with Moses; others I would learn the difference between Kung Fu and Karate, accompanied by demonstrations, from Vern; sometimes I would watch Gary pull his hilarious pranks on Leon, among others; or I would be enlightened by Kat's bright demeanor as she showed off her newest fashion accessory. And how could I forget discussing current events and personal life updates with Mary, Catherine, and Doris? I would like to thank these three ladies for always encouraging me in my personal endeavors. Seeing you all at my show warmed my heart, and the fact that you had the after party at my Dad's restaurant made me even happier! Thank you, as well, for allowing Thomas and I to lead a meditation. That was an incredibly moving moment.*

*Writing this now, I realize how much I am going to miss this place and the people there. Luckily, I'll be attending school in Minneapolis (U of M) in the fall so I can visit every now and then. Peace House has taught me the power of honest dialogue and we, as human beings, are one and the same at our most vulnerable state. Thank you for this year and I hope to see you all when it is safe.*

*Sincerely,  
Elijah Awada*

# DIRECTOR'S CORNER

When I studied Political Science as part of my undergrad degree, I was introduced to the phrase “May you live in interesting times.” In giving us this sentence, Dr. Keeley made sure he didn’t tell us whether this was meant as a blessing or a curse. Now that we are living in the most interesting times I have ever seen, I’m leaning more towards the curse interpretation. I don’t have to go over all the upheaval that Covid and the killing of George Floyd have brought to our lives. But as bad as this is, the effects have been even worse for the PHC community members. As a group they suffer from more health problems than the general population while having less chance to self-isolate. With the destruction in south Minneapolis, the community has almost no access to groceries, bathrooms and other essentials. It all reminds me of James’ words in the Bible:

*Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.” Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring.*

While health experts and scientists predicted that a pandemic would happen at some point, no one foresaw the when, where and how that has engulfed us. No one saw the protests coming. We all (including PHC) had our plans, and then, suddenly, we didn’t. Happily, people can be adaptable, and having their plans upset has given many people the opportunity to create new roles for themselves through their creativity. At PHC, we are doing our own adapting. We have already passed through several stages and will continue to adapt as needed. Like many others, PHC isn’t really “planning” at the moment. Instead, we watch what is happening around us and use our resources as best we can when an opportunity arises. For those who continue to support us through these times, we thank you. We know your plans have been disrupted too, and we appreciate you staying the course with us and supporting PHC with your prayer, energy and finances. Now, more than ever, we need your financial support. We anticipate an increased number of community members needing our help as evictions caused by job losses hit our community. Please consider an extra gift to help us meet the emerging needs.

