



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.



FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING
36 YEARS!
1985 - 2021



Message from the Chair of the PHC Board of Directors

One of the privileges of being on the Board of Directors of Peace House Community (PHC) has been to witness first-hand the generosity of all those who contribute to Peace House on a regular basis. I get a notification when donations are sent in, and all throughout the pandemic we have received donations from generous supporters. Thank you to all of you. As you know, it has been a continuing challenge to meet the needs of an ever increasing number of community members who seek food, shelter and community at PHC.

But it is not only monetary contributions our supporters make. Every week donors contribute clothing, hygiene products and many other useful household items. Others donate their time and their skills, doing haircuts, bike repairs, hand massages and holding deep, deep conversations with community members. Volunteers also contribute by their presence at meditation, including leading or co-leading discussions.

Dedicated volunteers are the life-blood of Peace House. It is as true now as it was in the days of our founder, Sister Rose Tillemans. Volunteers train other volunteers. They recruit other volunteers and board members. It is truly gratifying.

Now the need is greater than ever. As the cold weather approaches, more and more of our community members are threatened by the potential ending of the eviction moratorium as they work to meet their basic needs. A double whammy!

So thank you again for your past support. I hope we can count on you for continued support. Many of our supporters have contributed faithfully for many years. We hope we can count on that support in the future.

I'm sure we can!
David Scott



COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT: MEET MICHAEL "MIKE" WHITEBULL

Mike was introduced to PHC during his years in middle school. They lived in the neighborhood and while walking, his mother Shirley said, "Let's stop in Peace House."

This began Mike's presence with us. Early on he always felt a sense of belonging and knew PHC to be a place where he could connect with his mother and be welcomed by other community and volunteer members. This sense of belonging has kept him coming for 30 years.

During adolescence Mike describes sacrificing his own education through truancy in order to see that his younger siblings made it to school. This truancy eventually led to a knock on the door and a child protection order resulting in his entering a foster home. This separated him from those siblings he'd looked after and needed to stay in touch with. It was a painful time.

As a young man he witnessed a violent attack on his mother which resulted in her losing one of her unborn twins. With great sadness Mike remembers the lost twin survived three days. He described how he was able to cradle his new brother in his arms while feeling and hearing his last breath.

His mother's death was painful, but she left him with many words of advice and memories of the beautiful person we all remember her to have been. He calls on her spirit often to remind him to "learn to curb your violent temper." This he struggles to learn. Having her remembered on the PHC We Remember board is important and comforting, reminding him of her love for him throughout her years.

Today, Mike is giving much to PHC through his daily volunteer efforts, helping keep up the grounds and doing other tasks. Working with Loaves and Fishes in our facility helps him establish other bonds and valued friendships with other supporting people. All of these activities, he says, help keep him "out of trouble" and help him rebuild his life. He now strives to help others, be kind and erase old negative habits and behaviors. He smiles as he explains how hard he works to avoid the "hard stuff," sticks with Miller Light, and avoid those who might take him "down the wrong path." Aware of his Native heritage, he described the inherent obstacles from the outside and the inside that he and his relatives experience. His insights are to be admired.

When asked what it would be like without the PHC, he just rolled his eyes, looked at the ceiling and blew out of his mouth.

Update: Mike was just hired as a paid staff dishwasher. It's obvious from this photo that he enjoys it and is doing a great job. We're so pleased to have him onboard!

Please join us in our work. Your involvement will make such a difference.

PHC is now feeding over 1,400 community members per month. You can be part of the community by paying for the groceries we use. Please consider purchasing groceries:



For a day - \$30 | For a week - \$150 | For a month - \$625

PHC has other expenses besides food. For \$3,500, you can keep PHC open for one week. This will cover staff costs, insurance, utilities and all the other expenses that we have to cover.

For complete information on the various ways to donate, please see our website: [www. peacehousecommunity.org](http://www.peacehousecommunity.org).

Thank you for your generosity to the community.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MEET DANIEL GERDTS

PHC: Tell us a little about your professional life.

DLG: I am a lawyer by trade – a solo private criminal defense practitioner, mostly representing indigent defendants as their appointed counsel in federal court. Directly after law school I spent some time investigating and documenting human rights abuses in the Mexican criminal justice system. I then clerked for a judge on the federal court of appeals, and have been in private criminal defense work ever since. In my late teens, however, I was a professional bicycle mechanic.

PHC: How did you hear about PHC?

DLG: I have known of PHC for a long time, through Jim McKinney, while I was dating his daughter Cate. Jim is now my father in law, and obviously a good influence. I was surprised to learn that my own daughter Angela also volunteered at PHC some years ago when it was at the former building. As Jim and I were chatting about it at a backyard barbecue this summer, she heard us and said, “Are you talking about Peace House?! I used to volunteer there!”

PHC: What convinced you to volunteer at PHC?

DLG: My wife Cate, who is a financial supporter of PHC, receives the newsletter. A couple of years ago she showed me the posting in the newsletter seeking bike mechanics to volunteer their services. She thought I might be interested. I signed up without telling her, and she was happily surprised when she found out one day as I was packing tools into my car.

“The stuff that happens at PHC may seem simple and basic, but the community and what goes with it are really important and indispensable.”

PHC: How often do you volunteer?

DLG: I try to get in once a week for a couple of hours, as time permits, but I have to work it into my court calendar, so I have no regular day. The arrangement seems to work well because it is so flexible.

PHC: What do you do while you are at PHC?

DLG: I fix bikes! Sometimes it’s just routine maintenance; sometimes it’s replacing bearings and axles. Some bikes clearly have emerged recently from dumpsters, some are top-notch two-wheelers, and some have that certain je ne sais quoi that bespeaks a questionable provenance. I fix ‘em all!

PHC: What do you find rewarding about coming to PHC?

DLG: Empowering people with reliable, healthy, green transportation! I am a huge supporter of travel by bicycle, and a big bike fan. It has been a primary mode of transportation for me all my life. I was 15 when I left on my first solo bike tour. I have raced both road and mountain bikes. I commute as much as possible by bike. And I have been building and repairing bikes and bike wheels since adolescence. Helping others to get around on a bicycle is extremely rewarding. It will save the planet, and everyone’s health, and requires relatively little infrastructure. You don’t really want to get me started on this

PHC: Is there anything else about PHC that you think our supporters should know?

DLG: It is always a pleasure to show up at Peace House! It does not get old. The stuff that happens at PHC may seem simple and basic, but the community and what goes with it are really important and indispensable.



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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Recently one of PHC's community members described his life on the streets in a way that made me want to memorize every word he said. His description of life on the streets was so poignant and summed up the struggles he faced so perfectly that I could never match his eloquence. His story summed up why PHC is still so dear to the community. Although I can't remember what he said word for word, I'll do my best to reproduce his words so that you can understand what we are asking you to support.

We used to be tight, you know? The whole group of us, we always watched out for each other. If you stole from one of us, you had to deal with all of us. But now, we're all pulled apart. Covid did a real number on us. Now, it's like we're scared to get close because we don't know who's going to be next to die. It hurts too much to be friends now because we think we'll lose each other. We used to share everything. You need something? I'd give it to you. Now, we steal from each other, get in fights with each other. But I still don't want to go into housing. This is my place. My wife and I spent our time here before she passed. My wife loved the alley behind Peace House. I feel like I'd be turning my back on her if I left it. You know, in the mornings, when it's quiet, before everyone gets moving, I come down here and talk to her like she's still here. "How was your night? Did you sleep good?" That sort of thing.

This is only a sample. He spoke for 15 minutes, telling me about friends who had passed, how he still managed to find good in his life, and what he might do in the future. I wish everyone could come to PHC to hear stories like this, as difficult as they are to listen to, and see how PHC gives the community some calm in the storm, even if only for a little while.