

Newsletter committee

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Margaret

In the history of the school there have been two students who met the criteria for The Phoenix Award; both were in this graduating class of 2007. The first name he called was Margaret Mitchell. I don't know if Margaret knew she was getting these awards but it is a lesson for her and a reminder for others that hard work does have its rewards.

I was extremely proud of her along with her family who attended the graduation. We then went back to Guardian Angel where Mr. Raymone organized a surprise graduation party and all the girls and staff celebrated with Margaret and she was

given a gift card.

Congratulations to Margaret on achieving this milestone. Stay focused and work hard toward your endeavors. Continue to be a good mother who wants to provide a good life for your son, Makhi. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge those who have supported Margaret before and after our merger: social workers, supervisors, staff, family, friends and peers. You may never know how you help or encourage another person. Margaret is a shining reminder for us all to keep up the excellent work.

Denena Smithwick

Mission Statement

Inspired by the gospel message "Let the children come unto me," St. Vincent's Catholic Home provides services to children, youth and their families. Recognizing the dignity and worth of all persons, we are committed to work together to help families and their individual members to develop to their fullest potential and to experience the fullness of life that is their heritage as children of God.

In this spirit, we accept each individual as Jesus did, and embrace every person of every race and creed in a community of faith, hope and love. Utilizing the core values of compassion, dignity, charity, justice and excellence basic to Christianity and the field of professional Child Welfare, St. Vincent's will continue to impact on social change and advocate for social justice in service to the children and youth and families of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

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**ST. VINCENT'S
 TACONY**

Let the little
CHILDREN
 Come unto Me

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Ripples from the River

Volume II, Issue 2

A NEWSLETTER OF ST. VINCENT'S-TACONY

November 2007

BREAKING NEWS

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is not only a good organizational goal but has become a way of life at St. Vincent's. Ten meetings involving more than 50 staff mem-

holders in September. We were pleased that these results indicated that all our Child Welfare Outcomes for 2006/2007 were met. According to the Indicators of Performance, the agency outcomes for Safety, Permanence, Well Being and Satisfaction were achieved in all our programs.



CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT

The expansion and refinement of our CQI process was mandated by the Council on Accreditation (COA) Self-study requirements. In 2009, St. Vincent's will need to undertake another COA self-study process in order to gain COA Re-certification which this time will include our community-based Group Home programs.

John Timothy Paul

Congratulations Margaret

I had the honor of attending Margaret Mitchell's graduation from Fairhill Community High School. It was a beautiful and well organized event for the small graduating class of twenty-two. Of that twenty-two, ten including Margaret were Honor Roll Society students. The Principal gave a brief summary of the impression each graduate made on him and one thing he said about Margaret was, "Ms. Mitchell is a focused, independent, young woman



who works hard." Evidently his impression was accurate because Margaret received three separate awards for Top Honors in English, Math, and Physics. The Principal presented a special award just created this year, whose concept was inspired by a student and I believe that student was Margaret. This special award named The Phoenix Award for those who have made the Honor Roll for every module of the 2 1/2 year program at Fairhill Community High School.

See **Margaret** page 4

CELEBRATE STAFF

Again this month we remember a long-time employee. She is Regina Case, a present employee of Guardian Angel Home. Regina has worked at St. Joseph Catholic Home for 9 1/2 years. Prior to working there she worked in the campus shelter program at St. Vincent's for approximately two years.

Her favorite memory of St. Vincent's is one in which a child was placed but would not talk and didn't know how to ride a bike. Several weeks later you could see a change in her and she would be talking and riding, and enjoying herself. Another child, a boy who wouldn't talk, brought a smile to her face when she was walking down the

hall and the child finally said his first words to her, "Shut up!" She was so happy that he spoke. In her present job Ms. Case loves to see the girls



learning parenting skills and learning to communicate and show love to their babies. "I love my job working with teenagers and children."

A person who played a key role in Regina's life is her grandmother. Her grandmother taught her to be strong, to respect others and, most importantly she says, to respect herself.

Ms. Case's hobbies are dancing, shopping, and reading books.

We would all like to thank Regina Case for her commitment to children.

Paul Chick

SPOTLIGHT ON... Summer Camp

St. Vincent's Home-Tacony Summer Camp was a big success! The Camp was developed for teenage girls in residence at St. Vincent's Home who do not have summer school, a summer job, or any other growth oriented off grounds summer activity. The Camp was organized by residential unit manager, Darcel Mason. It ran Monday through Thursdays, 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. Ms. Mason, who also supervised all camp activities, was supported by Antoinette Muse, Samantha Rocca, and Anita Richardson all of whom are youth care workers at St. Vincent's Home.

Fifteen to twenty girls attended camp each day. Activities included arts and crafts workshops, in which the young women made and displayed their artistry to each other and our staff; a writers' group, in which campers wrote about and reflected on camp activities completed during the week and their life changes during their time at St. Vincent's Home. There were also book and discussion groups. One of the books read was "Who Moved My Cheese for Teens", a book about accepting change.

Camp offered some more educational activities as well. There were

classes on nutrition and wellness. These classes helped the girls learn about calorie intake, healthy eating, and the benefits of living a healthy life. To further build an understanding of the need to live healthfully, the campers made nutritious snacks from scratch, ate them, and rated them. Other healthy camp activities included exercise and walk/run groups, both of which were facilitated by licensed



Priscilla, Whitney, Ms. Darcel, Helena, and Jennifer trainers. One of the licensed trainers is the administrator, Joe Lavoritano, who facilitated the twice weekly walk/run group.

Other camp activities included dancing and drama. The dance group was the most popular camp activity and the one in which the young

women felt the most free. Most of the activity was centered on *praise dancing*. The camp drama group was also a smash hit! The group acted out a play written by one of our campers which deals with life on the street.

Field trips were positive rewards for our girls' participation. Supervised by camp staff, trips included the mall, movies, local swimming pools and parks. More extensive trips were also offered to Dorney Park, the Pocono's, bowling, and the zoo.

Each week the campers were asked to rate the St. Vincent's camp program. Most youths rated the program a "5", which was the best rating on the scale. They commented that they liked camp because it was educational, healthy, and most of all, fun.

Summer camp ended in late August with a special show put on by the campers, followed by a luncheon. The show's theme centered on displaying the accomplishments and knowledge gained by campers. There is no doubt—St. Vincent's Home Summer Camp was a fun-filled and educational time for all.

Rick Pytlewski

FROM THE DESK OF THE ADMINISTRATOR...

After almost a decade of service, our Administrator, Joe Lavoritano, has accepted a position as the Executive Director of St. Gabriel's System, in Audubon, PA. St. Gabriel's is part of



the Archdiocesan network and provides an array of services to Philadelphia's delinquent youth population. Our loss is St. Gabriel's gain and we will miss Joe dearly. We pray for his good health and continued success. On another note, Joe's replacement is me, Rick Pytlewski. I have worked at St. Vincent's for the past 6 years: the first two as a social worker and the last four as the Director of Social Services. I am also a twenty year veteran of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia with experience in programs centering on homelessness, the mentally ill, and abused or neglected children and their families. I now look forward to a long lasting relationship with our staff, our residents and their families, and of course, our benefactors. Our benefac-

tors are very important because without your support we cannot continue together to do what we do -**Providing help, Creating hope** -for our youth, their children, and their families. As always, thank you for your support!



Rick Pytlewski

SPIRITUAL SPACE

This past year we held two gatherings for moms, and moms-to-be in our Chapel at St. Vincent's-Tacony.

Ed Lis, Pastor Bounds and Pastor Garvin (form Star Of Hope Baptist Church) Sr. Louise, Joe Lavoritano, Rick Pytlewski, Pam Wilson, and Sr. Barbara



Rev. James Garvin

joined in an Ecumenical Christian Blessing for mothers, babies, and toddlers. Our moms and children from our Group Homes, Guardian Angel and St. Vincent Maternity Residence also joined us.

Our first blessing took place in April, and our second took place in July, totaling 44 mothers and mothers-to-be and 36 children. Needless to say our Chapel was full of life with all the tots, and the Spirit was never more present than at this time when our moms asked God's blessings on themselves and their children. As the mothers (literally) lifted up their children to

God as part of the blessing ritual – our hearts throbbed with the "peace that surpasses all understanding."

Each mom received a red rose from the altar to mark the occasion, and the gathering was followed by a "pizza and coca-cola party".

BAPTISMAL HIGHLIGHTS
We also are very happy to announce the Baptism of four of our young girls

in the 'V' building. Anna, Cerron, Francesca, and Sytira were baptized in June at Star Of Hope Baptist Church. Our girls were very happy to return to their Baptist roots, and were warmly welcomed by the Clergy and members of Star Of Hope. May God be with you all!

Sister Barbara Zurine



Candice and Saliyah, Jackie and Jjylil, Demetria and Khree